

GRAHAM GREENE

RUMOUR AT NIGHTFALL



by Graham Greene



To Graham Greene completists,

Please enjoy a PDF copy of Greene's third novel, '*Rumour at Nightfall*'.

Published in 1931 - following poor reviews and sales, the novel was repudiated by the author and never republished (along with its predecessor '*The Name of Action*').

The PDF copy here includes a mock-up Paul Hogarth cover, an image of the first edition dust jacket and poorly photographed images of the original pages from the 1931 Heinemann edition. Sadly one page is missing (the second to last page).

I have shared the following pages on archive.org for free, and strictly for non-profitable purposes. I note that the PDF copy I shared a few years ago of '*The Name of Action*' had been put up for sale through an online retailer, but was thankfully removed. If you have paid money for this document, please request a refund.

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*Rumour at
Nightfall*

*Graham
Greene*

Author of "THE MAN WITHIN"

RUMOUR AT NIGHTFALL

NOT FOR SALE

Also by Graham Greene

The Man Within

The Name of Action

*Rumour at
Nightfall*

by

Graham Greene



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FOR
MY FATHER
AND MOTHER
IN
GRATITUDE

“O ye that stand upon the brink,
Whom I so near me through the chink
With wonder see: What faces there,
Whose feet, whose bodies, do ye wear?
I my companions see
In you, another me.
They seemèd others, but are we;
Our second selves those shadows be.”

Thomas Traherne

RUMOUR AT NIGHTFALL

PART I

FRANCIS CHASE let the reins fall and allowed his horse to feel its way towards the camp. He whistled a tune softly, so that the sound might not penetrate into the pine woods on either side of the path. From a long way behind came the sound of following hooves, of horsemen riding through the dark beneath a moon, whose yellow harvest radiance cast at their feet the impression of rocks, the Pyreanean peaks. He had outstripped his companions, who were weighted and impeded by their burden. To-morrow, he thought, I will be able to send a better message to my paper than I have ever sent before; my protest against returning home will be justified. Carlos, the Pretender, had submitted, but the war was not over. It had been withdrawn from the open, where battalions could manœuvre, into small and dark defiles. He was not troubled that the men with whom he had left the camp that afternoon had failed in their main purpose. They had brought something back with them as well as the burden, two small black waterproof bundles which lay against his saddle for his fingers to caress and of whose importance, he was certain, only himself was properly aware.

His horse went slower, stumbling a little as it

mounted the steep uneven path. One moment they had been surrounded by warm dry air, the next they had walked into a territory of rain. It was a soundless and an invisible rain. The needles of the pines remained unstirred, but exhaled, at the touch of moisture drops of sweeter scent. Even when the moon appeared from behind peak or rock, Chase could not see the rain, unless a faint blurring of the air, like the passage of an unfrightening, familiar ghost, was it. It soothed all his skin which it could find, his face and hands, with coolness, and he welcomed it, not raising the collar of his coat. His horse whinnied, lifting its ears, and the sound which a few hours before would have filled him with an awareness of danger was now no more to him than the exultation of a fellow beast at success and a return to safety. His lips ceased to mould a tune and moved to a medley of stray, sentimental lines of verse. "El Rey" he called the password, in answer to a challenge from the roadside, towards the gleam of a gun barrel, and rode on.

He would have liked there and then in the night, in the soft rain, to have drawn the notebook from his pocket and begun his message. His newspaper could receive only a summary of what he wished to say, the details must be left for the letter which he would write to Michael Crane. He wanted to describe the ride from the camp, six men in the late sunlight leaning far back in their saddles, aiding their horses to keep foothold with a pull of the rein, a twitch to the side, a word whispered in Spanish to the long attentive ears. Then their arrival, three men on each side of the gully, and the horses gagged with rags, and the long

wait. A whistling, hardly audible where they lay in the rocks above, forewarned them of the arrival of two men, who rode into the gully from either end, stooping low, with an easy rein. When they met in the centre, Chase's companions opened fire. There was no concerted signal to cease; the shots dwindled, until the last was overtaken and its sound overwhelmed by the echoes bandied from rock to rock. Then silence fell, and the shadows lengthened, each rock adding its thin dark complement to the troop of warders that closed the bodies in. They had a single casualty; a quiet fair man called Roca was shot in the chest as he bent over one of the guerillas, who feigned death with that limited success before it overtook him. Captain Quintana turned the dead faces out of the shadow and shook his head. "He is not here," he said. "These are mere——" he did not finish his sentence, a contemptuously turned back conveyed his meaning. It was Chase who discovered the waterproof bags among the rocks where they had been flung and turned, as he was convinced, failure into success. A good story, he thought, his mind untroubled by the sound of slow horses behind where Roca was being brought back with pain to die, but it was more than the hope of a good story which lightened his heart. It was the sense of action, something done at last to break the monotony of eventless days. Even in the metallic sunlight he had gained the impression of life lived in a dark room with the windows shut. There had been, perhaps, figuratively, a reek of old incense, and a plaster figure or two, obscure, in corners, in the gloom. Even the object of their life

here in the mountains appeared too often to be a shadow rather than a man. His fingers played upon the bags at his side. The afternoon might have ended that, and soon he would be back in London, where a man could see quite a long way in front of him, the stages of a career, money, success, a wife, children, a home. His thoughts ended abruptly there, where he knew a Spaniard's would begin. He had no desire to question—after that?

As he turned a corner of the rock, light dazzled his eyes, which were accustomed to the dark, but the illumination came from no more than a few candles stuck in their own wax on a table in the open. A stout elderly man sat at its head in a soiled uniform, his head hidden in his arms. The wax of the candles ran down, sizzling as it met the cold of the table, damp with rain. The man did not stir except for a slight, regular motion of the shoulders. He might have been sobbing, bowed in grief before a body laid out for burial with the candles lit on either side. But when Chase called out his name, "Colonel Riego," he lifted his head and showed that he had been asleep. Between sleep and grief, however, there had been no great separation; the dark melancholy eyes peering with confusion from a bearded face had not seen happy visions.

"Well?" he asked. Focussing his eyes with difficulty, Chase dismounted and struck the rump of his horse, which moved into the darkness where its stable lay. "We are back," Chase said.

Colonel Riego, speaking very slowly, began to explain the attitude in which he had been found. He

seemed to think that it needed explanation even to a foreign journalist. "We were having a conference to-night," he said. "I sat on afterwards to look over some papers. I was asleep?" he questioned the fact, as though his brain had continued to work with the activity of one awake. "Where are the others?"

"They are behind," Chase said. "You don't ask whether we've taken Caveda."

"I never expected it," Riego said. "I knew he would not run the risk himself."

"You were right," Chase said and added with excitement, "but I've brought something back." His excitement lit no answering interest in the tired eyes which watched him across the candles. Indeed they had ceased to watch him with anything more than a mechanical regard. Colonel Riego was listening to the sound which Chase had heard for some hours, that of horses moving more slowly than even the rough ground warranted. He could not understand the cause of the old man's intentness.

"The others are nearly here," he said.

"What are they carrying?"

Chase said carelessly, his fingers on the waterproof bags: "One of the men was shot. Roca, I think, is his name."

"Is he dead?"

"Not when I saw him last. He may have died on the way up." Chase watched Riego with curiosity but without comprehension. The man might have heard of his son's death from his expression of tired disheartenment. I shall never understand these Spaniards, he thought, and the importance they attri-

bute to death. They seemed every one of them to fight under the shadow of this sense of immortality. Round corners, in the shadows cast by anonymous peaks, stood wooden crosses bearing bloodstained and contorted Christs, the superstitious emblems of a race untouched by scientific knowledge. Their religion seemed to him not a consolation but a horror, the product of a deadly cold and an intolerable heat. Dark silhouettes, they passed before him, he conversed with them in their own tongue, he jested with them, but they did not understand his mirth and he did not understand their seriousness. They were to him tall, dignified shadows on a screen. He could regard them æsthetically but not humanly.

Colonel Riego rose with sudden decision from the table and strode to meet the horsemen. Chase ceased to fumble at the waterproof bags. Apparently the one important result of the ambush must wait on the death of a private soldier. It was fantastic. What would have happened on the other side of the frontier a few years ago if Mahon or Moltke had been swayed by the thought of lost lives? He heard Riego's voice: "Have you Roca there? Is he conscious?" The shadows outside the segment of light thickened and stirred confusedly with life. A horse blew windily in the dark, and voices fell to a murmur, like the respectful sounds which encircle any peaceful death-bed. A man ran from the dark into the light and into the dark again without a glance at Chase who stood alone in the desert of yellow radiance. Then Colonel Riego walked quickly past him and disappeared into the background of shadow. Chase wanted to call

after him, "Leave Roca. Attend to me. Isn't this war? What does one man's death matter?" but from the absorption of the tired face that at that moment cared no more for Caveda than for Darwin he could expect no answer. With petulance Chase flung the bags upon the table and went himself into the dark from which the whispers came.

When his eyes grew again accustomed to the light he could make out the pale face of Roca staring from the ground. He had the wide low skull and the fair hair of a Cantabrian. A man knelt at his side, while the others stood round him with bowed expectant faces. "It is all right, Luis," the kneeling one whispered, his mouth close to the ear of the dying man, whose ineffectual struggle to speak brought bubbles of blood to the lips. He put his mouth alongside Luis's and blew the froth away. Chase's stomach stirred with nausea, but the circle of watchers was quite unmoved by the physical ugliness of death. They were accustomed to it. Every Christ in every church seemed to suffer more. But with the fear behind the struggle to speak they sympathised, the mental anguish they shared.

Moving their limbs with a sombre dignity, they made room for Colonel Riego, who returned with a crucifix and a chain of beads. He lifted a hand from under the rug that covered the body and laid the beads across the fingers, which tried without success to hold them fast. The dying man raised his head with a spasm of strength and said indistinctly through a foam of blood: "A priest." To Chase's astonishment Colonel Riego knelt by the body and addressed

the private soldier by his Christian name with the tenderness of a parent. "Luis," he said. "Can you hear me, Luis? Luis, can you hear me?" He seemed to read some answer in the apparently expressionless eyes, for he continued: "I have sent for a priest, Luis, but he will take some hours to come. You may not live till then. For the good of your soul, will you not confess your sins to your comrades?" Again the face was convulsed by the effort to speak, but the attempt was frustrated at the lips by a rush of blood. The man kneeling on the other side blew the foam away and Riego put his lips close to Luis's ear. "Listen," he said. "Can you close your hand?" It was achieved with painful slowness. "Close your hand for 'Yes,' Luis," the old man said and began to catechise him. "Is it long since your last confession?" The hand closed. "Two months?" No movement. "More than two months?" The hand closed.

Chase lowered his gaze to the ground. He was shocked by the long effort required of the dying man. Why can't they leave him in peace, he thought, instead of harrying him to death with uncomfortable questions?

With what seemed to him a pitiless tenderness Colonel Riego's voice went on, probing the secret life of the dumb man. "Since your last confession, have you committed any carnal sin? More than once? Was it with a woman? Was she married?" The clouds that covered the moon were for a moment scattered by the same damp breeze that touched the clothes and faces of the watchers. Chase saw for an instant with the clearness of day the clenched fingers, the

face contorted with the effort to speak, to explain, to excuse. "Father," the man whispered. Already Colonel Riego had become in his confused mind the priest with power to absolve him. "Father." The stout tired figure bent closer. "Have you . . ." the catechism began again, as the clouds drove up and the light faded out of the darkness. "Touches, father, touches. Only touches." The whisper implored the acceptance of that distinction; the fear of loading himself before God and man with a sin darker than the truth gave him strength for a few seconds to overcome the rising tide of blood. Then the questions stemmed for a moment rolled again over his body with an increasing rapidity: "Have you lied? Have you slandered anyone? Have you failed to attend Mass? Have you neglected your prayers?" To all these questions a limp hand returned a denial. "Have you sinned by doubt? Have you been lacking in gratitude for God's mercies?" The man kneeling by the body said gruffly, "He's dead."

Colonel Riego, hardly pausing to alter the tone of his voice from question to petition, plumped on his knees beside the body and began to pray. Chase stepped away from the circle of kneeling men and returned to the table and the wind-blown candles. But the voice followed him in sombre and meaningless phrases, touching his mind first with embarrassment and then with uneasiness: "nor forget him for ever . . . command the holy angels to lead him to the home of Paradise . . ." and last a long foreboding cry, a petition that the soul of Luis Roca might not endure the pains of hell. For a moment under the

spell of that fear Chase wished himself back in London, back to small rooms lined with books, to cabs and the bustle of the gas-lit streets, to the policeman on his beat and to the clergyman explaining evolution to the black-coated figures in the family pews. There one could laugh with confidence at the notion of hell. Here . . . and I will laugh at it here, too, he cried impetuously to himself, exorcising vague fears. These people are barbarians. They are behind the times. An officer to behave like that to a dying private. It's absurd. But the train of ideas was broken by the sound of the men piling arms and the voice of Riego, "And now, captain, your report."

The two men seated themselves, ignoring Chase, and the junior officer began to apologise for the failure of the ambush. "I never believed that Caveda would be there himself," Riego said. "From the first I doubted Señor Chase's information."

Captain Quintana galled Chase with his desire to be fair. "One could not tell. Caveda has courage. A man like that takes risks."

"But it was not a failure," Chase protested, advancing to the table, "we have these," and he pointed at the waterproof bags.

"Señor Chase," Captain Quintana explained with maddening caution, "believes that these are Caveda's postbags."

"Open them then," said Riego.

Both Quintana and Chase stretched out their hands to the bags, where they lay in the centre of the table, but Quintana, seeing Chase's movement, let his hand fall. He said with courtesy: "It is your privilege,

Señor Chase. You found them."

Chase discovered that he was curiously excited, so excited that his fingers failed to undo the knots of the first bag and he was forced to slit the oilcloth with his knife. He did not know what he expected to find, but there were many things for which he hoped: the names of Caveda's friends who supplied him with food and ammunition; a plan of the guerilla's headquarters: perhaps a picture of Ramon Caveda himself, who was to him now no more than a name, the cause of long marches, shots in the dark, of the pale phosphorescence of Roca's face staring from the ground. He was said to be brown-haired, tall, well-made, but he did not know what the last term meant to a Spaniard. They possessed not even his photograph, and if he had walked into the camp that night, no one would have recognised him. And to Chase his character was as elusive as his face. He had courage, that was certain; he had cunning or perhaps only luck; but it was impossible to say whether his motive for continuing the war after Carlos had submitted was a love of what the Pretender stood for, a strong monarchy, the local customs, or a desire to enrich himself by plunder, or even simply pleasure in an adventurous and uncertain life. Colonel Riego would say one thing, Captain Quintana another, a peasant a third, a shopkeeper a fourth. As an Englishman Chase consciously sided with the party of law and order, with the King in being, but instinctively, illogically and against his own inclination he was interested in the mystery, in the faceless shadow who carried on a losing duel among the mountains. As his

knife tore the cloth of the bag he wondered, "Shall I to-night give Caveda a face, a character, perhaps even a tone of voice?"

But what first emerged from the cavity he had made was as elusive as Caveda himself; it was a perfume, sweet, but too faint to cloy, so evanescent that it was Chase alone who caught it before it was absorbed in the pervading scents of night, of melting tallow, pines touched by moisture, and the delicate, indeterminate odour of the rain itself. Chase put his hand into the torn bag and withdrew a letter. The envelope was sealed with green wax and holding it close to his face he found the source of the perfume.

It made him homesick. He had been for two years in Spain and the greater part of the time had been spent in the company of men and in harsh surroundings, on the march along narrow mountain paths, encamped on a bare hillside or restlessly turning on the bed of a village inn, seeking relief from the insects that stung and bit his body. The scent represented civilisation and women. Its very transience, touching his senses for a moment only before it was dissipated in the dark, was a parallel to the brevity of the delights he had forgone in Spain—the furtive touch of a woman's thigh, a gas-lit face turned towards him with an inscrutable regard, the brief flicker of lust and the thought of what a word might do, and then another image that banished all the rest; or a sound, the notes of a voice singing.

"Well?" Riego asked.

What an hour ago Chase hoped that the letter might contain was something wholly practical—a

plan, a picture, a name which could be used in the pursuit of Caveda. What it did contain, to all intents, was a laugh, the vision of a mouth curved at nothing in particular. The sentence which first met his eye, sprawling in large, loosely formed letters across the sheet of paper, was ridiculously incompatible with Colonel Riego's melancholy eyes and shabby beard, the anxious alertness of Quintana and the faulty brilliance of the candles. "Do you really think I take shoes as large as that?" and then a proverb—"Patience and shuffle again."

"Read it," Riego said.

"Somebody seems to have sent him some shoes, which are too large," Chase replied. "There's nothing much of interest," but the last remark was an insincerity, for he realised that for almost the first time in six months he was in contact with someone who laughed. He did not believe he had seen Riego so much as smile, and certainly his men were never heard to laugh. It was not that they were treated badly, that they were unhappy, but that apparently they had nothing at which to laugh. They had plenty of red wine to drink, a raw liquor which burnt a novice's throat, but they were never drunk. They sang songs, when silence was not required of them, but these were snatches gathered from a melancholy ancestral past, songs of unhappy love, but cynical and a little sour, religious songs that dealt inevitably with the agony of the Cross and the terror of death. Perhaps the cause was the weather, which was generally too hot or too cold for a light heart. But Caveda, whom they had been pursuing for the last six months,

giving him less peace than they gave themselves, found time and inclination to laugh at a pair of shoes. It was extraordinary. It was a little refreshing.

"A buffoon," Quintana said with a kind of quick chirrup like a bird surprised in its nest.

Chase turned over the sheets of paper. "There are three pages about the shoes. But his writing is very large. He says he must have softer leather. And then after that he does mention us. If he's a buffoon he's a clever one. Listen to this. 'Your information about their numbers is wrong. You told me Riego had at least a thousand men with him. He has not got six hundred. I have tested that. I tell you that unless he is reinforced I can go on for ever—until I die of old age, and then, Miguel, I shall choose where to be buried, and no one will be able to stop the funeral. But I must have new shoes.'"

"A boaster," Captain Quintana said with indignation. Riego shook his head. "I have written the same thing to Madrid week after week. I must have more men." He said with a reluctant smile as if it were a lesson he was learning with some difficulty from his enemy, "I'm an old man. I shall die of age the first of us two."

"'He's not a fool, Riego,'" Chase read on with a sense of cruelty. "'This is the last letter I shall send by this route. You can keep the shoes and anything else you have for me until I fetch them myself. That will be safe enough. None of them knows me, and I'll have the roads watched.'"

"He'll go too far," Quintana said with a small, bright flame of anger, which was as sharp and pointed

and petty as his own little dapper body. No one replied to him. He was negligible. Both men listened to the disembodied voice of Caveda talking on.

“ ‘Are you aware that I once knew Riego? He will have forgotten me, but I have a memory for faces. He was middle-aged then, tenacious, oh so tenacious!’ ”

“Where?” Riego burst out in impatience at the prolixity of his enemy. It was evident that he too had been curious about this Caveda, and now he had only to go back into the past to fit him with a face.

Chase hesitated. Caveda had often made his presence known at unexpected moments. They had lost a dozen men on the march at various times from shots from rock or tree. Now he was striking in the camp itself. “He doesn’t say where,” Chase said. “He just talks on. Nothing of importance.”

“Read it to me.”

“It’s a waste of time,” Chase protested.

“Read it to me.” Caveda was right—“tenacious—oh, so tenacious.”

“ ‘He even tried to hold on to his wife, as if a man of his age could. She was young. I knew her well.’ ”

Chase did not look up. He was ashamed at having read the letter. He did not know what to expect beyond some sign of pain, but there was no such sign. Riego said quite calmly, “It couldn’t be that man. He’s dead. I suppose it was another friend of my wife. I expect she had more than I ever knew. Go on. Don’t be afraid. She is dead. They are all dead. The dead cannot hurt us. I shall be dead soon. Perhaps Caveda.”

" 'But he wasn't altogether a fool even in that case, when a man is bound to look a fool. And I grant him his courage. He has had a lot to live down in his time. I'm still waiting for the gloves you promised me. And that other affair? Is it going well? I'm intrigued, I tell you. I'd risk a good deal for that. Not that I count Riego's men as a very great risk. Expect me one day soon.' And then," Chase added, "he puts a mark beside his signature. I can't quite make it out." He held the paper under a candle, but the shadow of his own profile, nose, mouth and chin, obscured the mark which Caveda had set there.

Embarrassment silenced Chase. He made no motion towards the other bag. He felt strained, uneasy, a little pitying. Quintana too was silent, but he caught Chase's eye, and the corner of his mouth twitched under the polished black moustache. Caveda was teaching them all the secret of mirth, Chase thought, but what had come to him from the paper as a bold, unhidden laugh, had been transformed in Captain Quintana's dapper body to a kind of thin dirty fume of amusement and cruelty. Nobody could break the silence but Riego, and he, it might be thought, would be intent behind his mask of weariness in following unhappy memories. But they were wrong. If he was tenacious, as Caveda had said, it was not of useless regrets. He said, "No, I can't remember him," and added, "Is that all?"

"All in this bag," Chase said, and both he and Quintana began to talk rapidly, to hide the old man's embarrassment under an accumulation of their own inanities. "That's disappointing," Chase said. "Of

course we know now that he's in communication with one of the towns—or villages." "If he leaves the hills," Quintana said, "we may catch him. He's taking risks."

Riego silenced him with the fact which they had both been too willing to ignore: "We don't even know his face. This adds nothing. If only I could remember——" he leant his head upon his hands and stared down at the table. A candle flickered at his elbow and went out, the flame drowned in its own grease. Shadows advanced across his face, eliminating lines until he might have been a young man, with his wife unmet and all the unhappiness she was to bring him still in the future, middle-age and adultery and Caveda yet to come. He raised his face again into the light of other candles, and the lines returned, so that the years they represented seemed lived through in a space of seconds. The memories, to Chase's astonishment, appeared to leave him undisturbed; his wife's infidelity was important only if it helped him to recognise the enemy. He shook his head: "No."

But the letter is not entirely useless, Chase thought. It gives Caveda a character, or at least a tentative outline of character. Scented sealing wax, a humorous pride in the smallness of his feet, a readiness to take risks, more odd in these surroundings a readiness to laugh. "There's still the other bag," he said.

Quintana opened it. He did not cut the leather, but picked at the string which tied it, until the knots yielded to his nails. "Only a pair of gloves," he said. "These must be for Caveda. The gloves he asks for

in his letter." They were riding gloves with fur round the wrists and a small coloured pattern embroidered in silk across the back. Quintana laughed without mirth. "He cares for his appearance." "They are fine gloves," Colonel Riego said with an attempt, painfully obvious, to be fair to an opponent. He picked up one of the gloves and measured it against his hand. It may have been true that Caveda had small feet; it was certain that he had large hands, broad and long; they matched, Chase thought, his bold careless handwriting.

"There's something inside this glove," Quintana said and shook a small silver object into the palm of his hand. "A coin?" Riego asked. He had not looked up but still measured the glove against his fingers, as if he hoped to read into the leather contours the human shape and to remember the face from the hand. He said thoughtfully, "It's a very broad palm."

The expression gave Chase an idea, which he was reluctant to put into words. The motive was not one he wished to attribute to the man who had broken the gloom, the superstition, the whisperings in the dark with so careless a laugh. But curiosity conquered, the desire to fill in, as it were, a little more the portrait of Caveda—big hands with a broad palm, small feet, the next thing was the eyes, which more than any other part of a man's body betrayed his character. "Is he waiting to be bribed?" he asked. Quintana, he knew, with his bright superficial courtesy to a friend, and his sharp superficial condemnation of an enemy, would have replied promptly that it was Caveda's sole motive. But Riego was a tena-

cious man, tenacious for truth. Age had at least taught him that. He may have been confirmed by the years in his belief in wandering spirits and a life out of the body; he had also been confirmed in his doubt of human motives. He had seen so many men who had done evil that good might come and so many who had done good for the sake of evil. "Perhaps," he said. "I can't tell. They think it in Madrid. They have even wanted to make an offer. But what would be the good of that, even if he took the money? It would encourage fifty more men like him. We must take him. That's the only way."

"It's a photograph," Quintana said. He had not been listening to them.

"Of him?" Riego asked with eagerness.

"Oh, no," Quintana said. "Only a woman," and he flung it spinning across the table with a complete lack of interest. Riego pushed it on one side; it had no value for him.

Chase said suddenly, "We've got him." In the space of a moment, the time necessary for the passage of an idea, all his sympathy for the man who had laughed was swept away by the excitement of the hunt, not the vain, melancholy drag after a dead scent, but the authentic thrill of the hounds in cry. "We've got him," he repeated. It was extraordinary to him that the two men should have so negligently dismissed the portrait, until he remembered that they were soldiers and not policemen. But a journalist was in a sense a policeman, a man trained to follow clues, a man with a nose for a mystery. "We have only to find this woman," he said, "and sooner or

later we have Caveda. Let me see the photograph."

He was a little daunted by the face and a little amazed that it should have any interest for a man like Caveda. Then he laughed at himself for his phrase—"like Caveda," when all he knew of him were a few physical and mental traits. It was obvious, however, why it had no attraction for Quintana. He gave the reason himself the next moment in reply to Chase's exclamation. "There are a hundred like her in fifty miles," and he added with the contempt of a man who keeps his religion well apart from his sexual life, "One of these good women. A spoilt nun."

It was, Chase thought with some amusement, a chilling portrait to send to a man living a hunted life in the mountains. A straight controlled figure, one hand stiffly placed upon a studio chair, a white, well-cut, unwelcoming face, eyes that stared towards the camera with no expression save that of disapproval. Chase found himself unwillingly in agreement with Quintana. One expected to see a cross hanging in the hollow of the breasts.

"What can Caveda see in her?" Quintana said.

Chase's antagonism was roused. He felt himself the woman's champion for no other reason than that it was he who had recognised her value. "She has fine hair," he said. "And her figure may be good. You can tell that she has well-shaped breasts." As he spoke his hand shifted and for a moment the immediate light of a candle lent a glow of colour to the portrait, so that he almost believed that he had caught a momentary vivacity in the cold, undoubtedly handsome face.

"Is this all?" Riego asked. "All," Quintana said. Both men sat in silence, waiting for Chase to speak, to justify himself, for it was he who had returned from San Juan with the information on which they had acted. Their silence did not worry him. I think I should know that face again, he thought. I could hate a woman like that. A spoilt nun, Quintana had called her. A woman so certain of the virtue of some acts, of some silences. I am certain of things, too, he thought, but they are different things. I am certain of what I want from life—success, money, friends—I am certain of what death is—the end. He suspected that her certainties were very different, made up of crosses and crucifixes, beads and prayers, tortures, flames, fear. With legs stretched out below the table, and hands deep in his pockets, he was aware of his body, the moist air, the wood of his seat. But she would pretend to be aware of a soul, she would belong to those who harried a dying man with questions, she would not be satisfied with the world as it was. He was well aware of Riego's melancholy waiting silence, of Quintana's mute question, and he was angered by them. For six months now he had felt a kind of silent accusation of stupidity, of crassness, of not being able to see behind the aspect of things.

Riego laid his hand on the table and seemed to indicate the letter of their voluble enemy, the gloves, the photograph. "These were not worth a man's life," he said. Again that emphasis on death. But it proved to be his only reproach, and Chase checked in time his angry rejoinder, confronted again by no more than an old man absorbed, tenaciously,

in his memories. "It was when I was second-in-command at San Juan," he said. "That was ten years ago." He began slowly and abstractedly, the words no more than a curtain behind which his thoughts could circle unspied upon, to excuse his memory. For a younger man, perhaps, ten years might not seem long. Or in a sheltered country. In England probably the years would pass rapidly. But in Spain there had been many changes and events in the past ten years. The Carlist war had been the least of them. "A woman's reign is a difficult time," he said, referring to Isabella, the lecherous, impulsive woman with her battalion of priests and lovers. The years had been difficult for a man tenaciously loyal to the law of rendering unto Cæsar. Now that there was a king again and Carlos had capitulated, things were very much easier, even with Caveda in the hills. Chase remembered what Caveda had written, that Riego's wife had been beautiful. If that was so, the memory had been overlaid with war, revolution, intrigues, court scandals, or perhaps only age. "I find it hard to remember." He glanced up and said with a note of apology for treating his wife's adultery with undue seriousness, "You see I destroyed all the pictures I had of her." The apology was explained when he added, "They might have been useful now."

Quintana said with a boldness that came near to impertinence, "When a woman's dead one hardly expects her to be of any more use—in this life."

"No, I was wrong." Riego shook his head sadly. He clearly felt that he had shown a lack of foresight, that for once personal feelings had made him im-

petuous. "One shouldn't let go like that." He rose from his chair and with his nails extinguished the candle nearest him. The brilliance of its flame became smoke, became dark. "One never knows," Riego said, moving round the table, putting out the candles.

Captain Quintana carelessly gathered up the waterproof bags, the letter, the gloves, the picture. Chase's achievement, the whole basis of his "story," was now enclosed by the thin fingers. Riego had gone. There was nothing more to keep them from their beds. Quintana yawned. "Not my turn to go round the outposts, thank God," he said. "These gloves, are they any good to you? The Colonel doesn't seem to want them. He's been given something to think about. A damned funny story. But, you know," he added deprecatingly but with courtesy, "it was hardly worth it." "It," Chase gathered, was the death of Luis Roca. "This frame might be worth something," Captain Quintana continued, weighing it in his palm. He half raised his hand to his mouth, as if to test the metal with his teeth, but meeting Chase's eyes, he paused with his hand half-way. "I suppose it is real silver?" he asked doubtfully.

"I'm riding into San Juan to-morrow," Chase replied, paying no attention to the question or to Quintana's anxiety. "Let me have the photograph."

Quintana closed his fingers more firmly on the picture. "Be careful. The shopkeepers are very dishonest. Do you feel capable of bargaining?"

"I don't want the frame," Chase said. "Keep it."

I want the photograph. I'm going to find that woman."

"But she may not be in San Juan. She may be in any of the villages round." With relief Quintana began to prise the photograph out of its frame. "One must begin somewhere," Chase said. "I have to send a message to the paper. And besides, look at the face. That's not a peasant woman. San Juan is the most likely spot."

Quintana deprecated with his hands. "This Caveda is giving a lot of trouble. All he wants is to be bribed—a sum of money, you know, and a rank in the army. I would give it him."

"No, no," Chase protested. "We will catch him. I'm certain of it." Quintana's words, allied to Riego's reference to what "they" wanted in Madrid, frightened him. He had staked everything on a story. He remembered the sharp telegram he had found waiting for him ten days ago in San Juan recalling him to London. Without hesitation he had disregarded it. An account of Caveda's capture would not only excuse any insubordination, it would "make" him professionally, for there was no other newspaper correspondent in Northern Spain. "I'll find this woman," he said. "The rest will be your job."

Quintana handed him the small circular piece of pasteboard with an affected grimace. "That type of woman," he said, "I can do without. A man," he rolled his eyes in an attempt at pathos, "needs sympathy."

They separated and made their way alone to the huts in which they slept. Through Riego's uncur-

tained window a light shone, and as he passed Chase caught a glimpse of the old man dressed in a billowing nightshirt standing before a statue of the Virgin. His fingers held—"tenaciously, oh, so tenaciously"—a string of beads. Chase went into his own hut and closed the door. He did not light a candle, for a pencil of yellow moonlight was enough to lead him to his bed. The air was growing very cold and he did not undress. From next door he heard a kind of regular whisper. For six months he had gone to sleep with the same sounds in his ears, and they held no secrets from him. He knew that the whisper came from Captain Quintana polishing his boots. He knew that the scuffles above his head were the rats in the roof.

Chase slept deeply. The excitement and disappointment of the day had tired him, but they provided him with no dreams that he could remember. He opened his eyes to a hard unrelieved sunlight where he had closed them to darkness and the pale yellow of moonlight. It was as if there had been no gradations by which the yellow had faded and gone and left the steel and glitter of the dawn. He lay in bed and wondered a little—have I dreamed? He was puzzled by a sense of weariness for which he could not account. Everything was familiar, the planks of the walls, the knot in the wood to which some previous occupant in lugubrious humour had added the features of a weeping man, the churned earth of the floor. He could smell the ammonia from the ground outside littered with horses' dung. All this was familiar to him, but the concrete images had lost

substance. They were like the reflection that a man sees of himself in a railway carriage window, laid across the scene outside without obscuring it. His own features are more familiar than the long parade of trees and fields in a strange shire, but they are more unreal. What it was that Chase saw past the wooden walls and the rocks and the hard light he could not tell. I must have been dreaming, he thought, and tried to remember something out of the secretive night, but was rewarded with nothing more enlightening than the image of a face hidden by a broad gloved hand. What his attitude had been in the dream—if a single image could be so named—he could not recall, whether it had been one of curiosity, fear, repulsion, or attraction. He had not pulled the hand away and he had seen no hint of the face to aid his daylight speculations.

Then in his breast pocket he felt the photograph of the "spoilt nun." He did not trouble to look at it. He rested more than satisfied with his first glance. It angered him even to carry it in his pocket. The sort of woman, he thought, to kill her husband with sermons instead of looking after the kitchen, and one thought leading to another he began to consider the kind of woman he would one day marry—chaste, but of course not cold, sympathetic, a good mother. Her time would be spent equally between her husband, her children and the kitchen. She would be attractive—not beautiful, Chase thought, for that carried with it an instinctive idea of immorality, incontinence, passion which had nothing to do with the begetting of children—clever enough to appreciate his

own liking for the safer forms of literature. But the thought peculiarly failed to rouse his enthusiasm. He recognised himself that it was too consciously raised to contest the enemy he carried in his pocket. There were limits to chastity, and that woman, he felt, was an ascetic. He wanted to show her how unattractive her kind had always proved to men; but did she care?

Outside he was disappointed to find an almost complete silence. He had wished to see Riego or Quintana and arrange before he left some way of communicating quickly with them if he came on the traces of Caveda in San Juan. That they had left the camp that morning without warning him was an offence. It was as much as to declare that they thought him negligible, that they had acted once on the information he had obtained and would not be tempted so again. A man crossed the wide stony plateau carrying a pail towards the huts. I will show them how wrong they are, Chase thought with anger, if only I can find the woman. The tip of a long shadow passed across the ground at his feet and he looked up into the glare of sun to see the man still some feet away, small and unimportant and curiously withered at the end of his black elongated stalk.

"Buenos dias, señor," he said, staring down his dark track.

Chase asked him where Colonel Riego and Captain Quintana had gone and was told that they had ridden out early with two patrols. They were engaged, Chase supposed, on another vain attempt to surprise Caveda, who was always aware of their movements within an hour of their leaving the camp. In San Juan lay the

only end to an expensive and wearisome conflict, yet they had left him without a word.

He said angrily, "I want my horse at once." What was the use of saying "at once," he thought, to a Spaniard. The man made no attempt to obey him, but asked with a soft, friendly, doubting air whether the caballero intended to ride far.

"To San Juan," Chase said. "Hurry. I want to be there before dark."

The man shook his head. The caballero would be well advised to wait till the next day. There would be a heavy storm long before he reached the town. Chase looked up at a sky that sparkled like mica and the jagged hills that stood in the hot sun, clear, flat and unreal like cut paper. "Nonsense," he said. There was no reason in the world why there should be a drop of rain. He argued against his will, "You have only to look at the sky."

The man did look at it very thoroughly, turning his back the better to do so on his long vivid shadow. Then he faced Chase again with a wink, and an expression of cunning on his medlar face. His look said as plainly as words, "The sun can't deceive me. I'm too old a hand for that."

"Well?" said Chase.

The man spat in the pail and repeated that there would be rain. Breaking suddenly into English, the words like a succession of bursting bubbles, he added, "Hell of a lot of rain."

"But how do you know?"

"One knows," the man said grandly.

"I must have my horse all the same and quickly,"

Chase said. He also knew—knew that the sky was clear, the sun strong, that there was no wind to bring up clouds. On facts which could be seen and felt he confidently based his belief—that there would be no rain.

He rode at first north-west, with the sun swinging round towards his back, so that he seemed always to be engaged in overtaking a dark rider who remained a few feet before him. The dry needles of the pines crackled under his horse's hooves like sparks, as though the sun's heat had caused the earth to smoulder. He halted for a moment and tucked his handkerchief into the back of his hat, as the rays more and more focussed themselves as through a burning glass upon his neck. It was hotter than the hottest day of an English summer, but it was autumn. That would become evident with late afternoon and evening when the fierce heat would turn to a fiercer cold. It was evident, too, when the track down which he steeply rode became a broader and more regular way, behind high rocks which were grey on his left side, deep black where the shadows fell, and a tawny smouldering orange in the sun. Here on a lower slope grew more familiar trees, the exotically deep-coloured pines dwindled and gave place to birch and elm, and a scurry of russet leaves, as in an English autumn, blew down the road. This restlessness first attracted Chase's attention to the wind which had risen in the last half hour. However cold the breeze might become in the later day, it was now too warm to offer any contrast with the hot air. One was aware of it only in the forms of movement, the

shifting of fallen leaves, and when a tree cast a shadow on the road, in the trembling of its delicate dark tracery.

A man came up the road driving a burdened mule. The mule slipped and stumbled on the rough way, its head bent before the glare of light, and the man pursued it, not with blows but with words. Chase smiled to hear the mule addressed in tones which might have injured a sensitive woman. The pair came nearer, the mule old, stumbling, unable to bear the light, the man, small, dark, young, with a flow of bitter and unhappy humour. The mule's past was not flung at it, so much as spread panoramically before its drooping head, its hopeless future was described, and its physical features were sketched in with a cruel caricaturist's skill. The man seemed so convinced of the animal's understanding that Chase ceased to be amused and began to pity the dumb beast that could not turn, like Balaam's ass, on its tormentor, but continued to plod up the steep, uneven way, uncertainly, miserably, hopelessly, round a corner of rock and out of sight—out of the mind, too, very soon of the only man that pitied it. For Chase's thoughts were soon bent on the dulling of the sun's rays, the gradual accumulation in the sky behind of banks of deep green cloud, and the greying of the atmosphere. The rocks, which had been lit by the sun into masses of warm fruit, became no more than the depositories of metallic ore. His shadow faded, disappeared. The gentle current of warm air, which had been all the wind there was, subsided; then returned in a gust which sent the leaves whirling down

the road, filling the air before him and behind him with brown particles, fell again, and last mounted like a rain-soaked rider at his back. It angered Chase to realise how right the groom had been, how wrong himself. Yet he had based his forecast on facts, while the man had only said that "one knew." It was part, he felt, of the whole air of the country, the mute accusation of stupidity against the stranger who did not share its superstitions. It vexed him to find a Spaniard right, even by chance, for it could have been no more than chance; there had been no trace of wind or cloud. He remembered then with annoyance the mule and how he had been trapped for a moment into sharing its persecutor's views that it could understand the human tongue.

And now he was to be caught by the storm with no shelter in sight. In five minutes it would be upon him. Already, looking upwards without turning his head, he could see the green progressive edge of storm pushing forward faster than he could ride. The road, though it was now a road and not a track, was too steep and stony for him to press his horse. The beast in any case did its best, its ears pricked, as if it could hear behind it the rolling tumbrils of the clouds, and when a longer gust brought with it a colder rain, it whinnied and shook its head. The sound emphasised for Chase the quietness. Whatever the horse could hear, he could hear nothing. The phrase was an exact one. Nothing was almost like a sound perceptible to the senses. The tread of his horse and the occasional rolling of a stone were no longer part of the general movement of the world, they were individual

vivid cracks in a stillness which, like a sheet of thin metal, covered the ground and bent under his weight. Now the grey of the sky before him was pushed back by a stream of green light, and when he looked up he could see the storm, in silence containing itself, the tremendous roller of a tropical sea in the moment before it falls and breaks. For a long moment it held, the great spume of dark cloud flung up above his head like surf; the wind dropped, and the remaining leaves ceased to wave but trembled slightly, continuously, like a nervous hand. The horse whinnied and began to move down hill at a jog-trot, half-heartedly, reckless.

Then with the effect of a great noise the wave broke. It hit Chase on the back like a club, bruising his flesh, and while he bent his head to avoid the blows, it flourished beyond him. The road in front disappeared in a grey tumult of water. In five seconds he was wet through and to all intents blind. If his horse had been leading him to a precipice edge he would have been none the wiser. He could not see five feet before him and he had no reason for believing that his horse knew the way better than himself. But he trusted it; there was nothing else to do, and the animal, the first fright over, accustomed now to the continuous low thunder of water striking rock, did its best. Its pricked ears indicated as much, even the disquietingly doubtful movements of its head. I think the road is straight, Chase thought. Certainly no choice of route would be visible as long as the storm lasted. He tried to look behind him, hoping to discern some break in the barrier of water, but it was

as though he had run his face against a wall and retreated bruised and bleeding. He found it hard to believe that in that direction the sun was shining; not that it was dark in the small cage of visibility in the centre of which he rode: the dim light was like quicksilver, the moon might have risen out of sight, or he might have been riding in a hall of mirrors. Half he expected to see his face reflected in the falling water. The rain attacked them now from another angle, it poured down the hill in their track, and swirled in small whirlpools round the horse's feet. The animal stopped and pawed with caution at the ground, as if it could no longer feel its hold with confidence. Through the noise of the rain Chase could hear the splash, splash of its hoofs.

Suddenly out of the falling water a building projected, like the prow of a ship. The shifting veils of rain lent it an air of movement, disclosed and hid again a crumbling corner of wall, and above his head, lost and found, a narrow bell-cote. A church, he thought. It was unnecessary in this country to doubt whether it would be open. They were always open and always dark and always crowded with images. There was generally a whisper round the Stations of the Cross or in the confessional box.

His horse, he thought with a glint of humour even in his cold and sodden state, had not the same distrust of religion as his master; perhaps St. Francis had been right to preach to animals. It nosed its way round the wall of the church, rubbing Chase's leg against the uneven stonework, seeking shelter. But there was no porch. The door of the church opened

straight on to the road and outside it, shrinking from the rain, were already tied a couple of mules. Through the door he could see with difficulty their owners, three elderly women dressed in black with shawls over their heads. They faded into the darkness of the interior and were visible at first only by the contrast of their white faces bent together with moving lips, talking friendly secrets. A group of old crows, Chase thought, and with reluctance dismounted to join them. He wished that he could find some shelter for his horse, but all he could do was to tie it close to the wall out of the wind's way, where it received only the stray lashings of the gusts.

Chase mounted the steps and entered the church. The old women, grouped socially with their backs to the altar, stopped talking for a few seconds and regarded him. Then they bent together again and continued their conversation. They felt no curiosity now. They had summed him up at once as a foreigner and a heretic, and they were no longer interested, however rare the sight of foreigners. Chase, tired of watching the silver curtain at the door, examined his surroundings. In the dark at first little had been visible but the scarlet spark of the altar light suspended on an invisible chain, like a glow-worm hovering in the air on dusty, phosphorescent wings. Now he began to discern the huddle of images that gesticulated melodramatically from the corners, a hand raised above the head in warning or denunciation, arms stretched out supplicating, imploring, a head bowed in grief and patient arms folded. It seemed to Chase that however lonely a man might be, in that

church he would pray in company.

"Caveda" and again "Caveda" he heard the old women saying. It was natural enough that they should speak of the man who was an unavoidable fact in that neighbourhood, yet now it was as if he had heard invoked an intimate ghost, a personal haunter. Softly on his toes he approached them from behind. His excitement needed explaining even to himself. I suppose it is because of my failure yesterday, he thought, in which I lost both story and respect. I'll show them, and "them" were all the untrusting people in his world—not Riego and Quintana only, but all the mute accusing Spaniards whom he had met, the groom who had foretold so accurately the storm, the mule-driver, the old women themselves.

He stood behind them and listened, but they spoke low and he found the country dialect hard to catch. He heard the words "shameless," "Godless," and after a time "Father Pedro." Beyond them in the doorway the silver veil had thinned to a cobweb through which stray gleams of light shone. "Caveda" and later "Caveda" the old women said. In the mumble of unintelligible words he caught the double syllables as if they were those of his own name. The sound of the rain ceased to be a low continuous murmur and became a succession of quick notes. One of the women looked up and said that the storm was nearly over. The oldest, picking a basket from the floor, turned her back on her companions and wandered into the darkness round the altar, where she knelt and began to pray. The third continued to talk rapidly, angrily. "Caveda . . . Caveda . . . Caveda."

In another moment, Chase thought, they will be gone. He touched her arm and said in what he meant to be a reassuring voice: "I heard you speaking of Caveda." He had not realised the full quiet of the church, how undisturbed it was by the women's whispers, until he heard his own voice soaring shrilly into the dark vacancy of the roof. The two old women turned on him and regarded him in silence, adding this sentence of his, this interruption, this vulgar break in the stillness to their previous estimate of him as "a foreigner and a heretic."

He added: "I'm not one of Caveda's friends. You needn't be afraid."

The woman who had been speaking stiffened and screwed up her mouth as if she intended to spit on the church floor. "I'm not afraid of him," she said and added suspiciously, "I've nothing to fear," as she stared courageously past him into the dark interior.

"Have you seen Caveda? Do you know anything of him?" he asked, and tried with difficulty to lower his voice. I am used to speaking out, he thought.

"What should we know of Caveda?" the other woman said, and both gathered their shawls round them and stepped back, hostile and suspicious, with eyes narrowed to little bright points like the altar fire.

He put his hand into his pocket and pulled out the photograph. "Do you know this woman?" he asked. It did not seem to him improbable. They all belonged together, virtuous and arid women. Neither made any movement to take the photograph, but

without a glance at it, shook their heads. He turned to see that the third woman had left her prayers and stood a few yards away watching him with the same hostility.

"Do you?" he asked, holding the photograph towards her at arm's length. "For God's sake look at it," he cried, "I won't hurt you." She took the photograph and gave it a reluctant glance. "Well?" he asked. He had to withdraw it from her fingers like a ball from a dog's mouth.

"You won't find her here," she said. She was older, greyer, more withered than her companions, but she had retained, it seemed to Chase, a little humanity, a touch of jealousy. She said with her hands pulling at her black, knitted shawl, "Not in that dress. We are poor people here." In the one glance at the photograph she had seen enough to make her envy the stranger her unattractive clothes.

It was useless to interrogate them further. Whatever news they had of Caveda, they would not tell it to a foreigner and a heretic. Outside the door patches of fleeting blue sky waved in the rain and desolation like a tattered banner. I can't get any wetter, he thought, and if I stay here, I shall freeze. I must have a fire. He asked the unapproachable pair, "Is there an inn near here?" If there was a church, there should surely be an inn. They paid his words no attention, continuing their unfriendly appraisal. He lost his temper then and striding to the door of the church flung back at the aged trinity who had ranged themselves side by side to see the last of him, "Do you call yourselves Christians?" and received a

grudging reply, "You've only to go down the road." He imagined that it was the jealous one who spoke.

Obedying that sole direction, "going down the road," Chase was touched more closely than usual by a sense of loneliness. The road which he could now see before him through the thinned rain was empty of life. Indeed he saw it with some exaggeration as filled with death, leaves that in the wet had lost the gold relics of autumn life and were ready for the broom and the fire. But that customary and comely interment of fallen Nature would not be theirs. They were half way to rotting and they would be left to rot.

Soon I shall be in San Juan, he thought, where there will be people, wine to drink, a fire. But it was chiefly the thought of the fire that comforted him. The people in San Juan were symbolised for him now in the face which he unwillingly sought. For six months, he considered, I have been alone. I could not have been more so if I had lived with the three women and their mules. If only Caveda were taken and I released.

He would willingly, in that depression, have sacrificed his "exclusive rights" for the company of another English journalist. He wondered who, if he had the choice, he would wish to accompany him. Not Peacock, he thought, nor Verity, those companionable drinkers at the "Cock," who were never really happy apart from each other and their mutual hoard of stories, fingered over so constantly and loved for their dirt. Nor Stephens, who was too amiable, too ready to agree; he would only emphasise the isola-

tion by recognising it. But the three men in any case passed through his mind as wraiths. They never took on any firmness of feature against the background of rock and rain. It was impossible to imagine them riding down the road with him in a Spanish autumn towards San Juan. But he knew who kept beside him, knee parallel to knee. "Crane," he said aloud, and in the mirror of rain before him, where if there had been any reflection it should have been that of his own face, he saw the nervous attentive eyes and the lips parted to assert the wrong thing. Always the wrong thing, Chase thought, remembering with a slow pleasure how they had never agreed on any subject.

The rocks on his right hand fell away and guiding his horse with caution to the side of the road he looked over a straight fall of fifty feet to a river, narrow and swift, rushing beneath a cream of foam. The road sloped downward, and it was not long before he turned his horse across a roughly built bridge, on the other side of which stood a group of primitive houses. It was as though the rocks between which he had passed had been the spawn of life, and here in the houses was to be found the second stage in evolution. What had been rock was now baked mud, what had been crack-grown plants were roofs of reed. Outside an open doorway a child and a dog playing on equal terms in the dirt, the trampled straw and dung, seemed to have just emerged from the primal element. One house had been lifted from the desolation of the road on stone pillars round which the rain and sewage eddied in a yellow stream to seek

the river; on a dry patch of ground two chickens pecked at some seeds, and a brown goat knelt and swept the earth with its beard.

Chase intended to ask the child the direction of the inn, but the question was answered for him by a few empty bottles, with the labels of a cheap apéritif, which shared the goat's tethered range. He tied his horse to a pillar and climbed a ladder. The room which he entered surprised him by its size. At the far end of the room, quite forty feet in length, was a great open fireplace, but it contained only a pile of white ash and a few half-burnt logs that might not have known the touch of flame for many weeks. The rain dripped steadily down the chimney.

The only heat came from a brazier in the centre of the floor. Three men were grouped round it. Two were seated on a bench, elderly men, dressed in breeches and short jackets with wide-brimmed hats upon their laps. The third stood. He was a young man, thin, conversational with lively gestures. Chase had the impression of talk cut off at his entrance, of a gesture stilled. As he stared with disappointment from fireplace to brazier, one of the old men requested him politely to close the door. He did so, and the act shut out light as well as air, for the only window in the room was coated with dirt. But the brazier glowed the more brightly for the dimness and warmed the eyes if not the body. The old men made room for him on the bench, but Chase preferred to stand in the small space of warmed air. From somewhere in the cold outer dimness a woman came. No, she had no food ready. If the caballero could wait

an hour or two, she would kill a chicken and cook it. She seemed to find it unreasonable when Chase said he could not spare the time, and admitted grudgingly that she had wine. The thick chipped glass of it which she fetched burned his throat like spirit, but it warmed him.

The young man who stood on the other side of the brazier swept back with his hand a dark lank lock of hair and inquired politely whether Chase had ridden far. Long before Chase's slow Spanish had explained time and distance, he had ceased to pay any attention. Turning on the old men and continuing the broken conversation he asked abruptly, "Come now. Who am I?"

One of the old men smiled and slowly bending forward with his hands flat on his knees, said, "Oh, we know you, Emilio. We knew your father and your mother and her father too."

The young man gestured impatiently. "Of course I am Emilio. Of course you know me. But who am I? Tell me that." The conversation now had completely reabsorbed them and they ignored the stranger at the brazier, who stood in a pillar of steam from his moist clothes.

The other old man said propitiatingly, "Of course, Emilio, you carry the mails. That gives you opportunities, but..." The young man interrupted him, leaning forward across the brazier and shaking a finger. "There is no 'but.' Don't I see the world? While you sit here drinking your wine, and what else? You haven't any women in this place. A lot of old chickens, that's all. Look at their necks. And how

they talk to you. Peck, peck, peck." He opened his arms wide in a gesture of magnanimity. "But I—I am not a villager. Every day, wet or fine, except Sundays and feast days, don't I drive the mails back and forth from San Juan and on to Aljerema? I tell you I see the world. And I tell you . . ."

The first old man said abruptly, "You can send a goose into San Juan and it's still a goose."

The orator paused. His lips moved in the throes of crushing composition, but the other caught quickly at the unexpected silence. "Robbery is always robbery, Emilio."

The young man made a gesture of seizing the words in mid-air and pinching them between thumb and forefinger. He held them up, as it were, on exhibition. "That is just it," he said. "That is just it. It is not robbery to take away what has been robbed already."

"Another glass of wine," Chase called to the woman, and lifted each chilled foot in turn to the brazier's burning core. How these Spaniards talk, he thought, and was pained for the second time that day by his sense of loneliness. He would have left the three men in their close companionable quarrel if it had not been for the cold and the rain.

"He's a thief, nothing but a thief."

The young man said indignantly, scowling under his dark lock: "You know nothing of Caveda."

Chase had learnt caution from his encounter in the church. He showed none of his interest, but kept his eyes fixed on a raised foot. If he listened, it might have been for nothing but the first sound of singeing

leather. "Caveda would never rob the poor," the young man said.

"The priest is poor," one of the others said obstinately, his voice a granite monument to disapproval. The orator laughed. "Poor. Poor. Oh, he may seem so to a countryman. But I know. I am not a villager. Don't you pray for your father the Pope? Well then, you should know all about him. He is richer, I tell you, than any man in Spain. If you were to see his palace in Rome you would be dazzled. The gold, the silver, the precious stones. And do you think he would let his priest be poor? Is it likely? Come now. The richer the employer, the richer the servant."

"You don't know everything, in San Juan," the old man protested.

"Perhaps not. But listen. Here is an Englishman. A widely-travelled man. He will tell you. Is not the Pope a rich man, señor?"

"Undoubtedly," Chase said.

"And the priests too?"

"I think," Chase said with anger at the thought of Roca struggling to confess a few sexual sins through his blood and fear and old Riego with his head bowed before a figure of plaster and paint, "I think they are better off than one thinks. They know ways of attracting money. Special masses. Dying bequests."

"Exactly what I mean," the young man agreed.

"He is only a foreign heretic."

"He is a widely-travelled gentleman."

"I've heard of Caveda," Chase said with a casual air which he felt the young man accepted at its face value. He was more uncertain of the elderly sus-

picious watchers. "What is it he has done?"

"He has robbed the priest," an old man said.

"Nothing but a jest," the orator protested. "What are a few pesetas one way or the other to a priest? You cannot sit there and tell me that it was more than a few pesetas. Free-will offerings. Peter's pence." He laughed with asperity.

"But what kind of a man," Chase asked, "is this Caveda?" He had three answers. One took the form of a cautious silence, another of a cluster of offensive epithets: "Thief, atheist, murderer." The third was longer. It was too inclusive as the second had been too brief.

"He is a much abused man. He is a Liberal. Oh, yes, he calls himself a Carlist, but what does he care for such politics? The caballero knows what a dirty game they are. Caveda is not a politician. He cares for the great, the fundamental things, Liberalism, the poor, freedom. He does not believe in priests. Kings, what are they beside the people? Carlos, Alphonso, all one. He calls himself a Carlist, yes. But a man must have a banner. It is—" fingers plucking in the air found the right word—"respectable."

"Yes," Chase said, "Yes. But I want to know what he is like. Is he tall or short, fat or thin, fair or dark?"

"But, señor," his informant protested, "that is unimportant. It is what he is that matters. He has a great soul. But, señor, I do not mean by that what the priests mean. I mean he feels, feels in the heart, señor, for Liberalism and the people."

"That is nonsense," one of the old men said. "The

Government is Liberal."

The young man laughed with a mingling of mockery and theatrical bitterness. "Listen to that, señor. So they talk in villages. But you are a much-travelled man and you can tell them—is a Government ever Liberal? It is a contradiction."

"But what I want to know is—what is he like?"

"But, señor, how can I tell you that? If I were to say that he was dark—does that mean the same to you as it does to me? If I were to say that he was a small man, it might mean something to us, who are young and strong and tall, but to these withered ones, what would it mean? No, señor, we can only understand each other when I say to you that he has a great soul."

"It means nothing to me," Chase said with irritation. "Have you ever seen the man?" Thin nervous palms were spread towards him, indicating some meaning too fine to be expressed in words.

"One knows in oneself, señor . . ."

"We have none of us ever seen him," one of the old men said.

Does the man exist at all? Chase wondered, amusing himself with the fancy. He had the gloves in his pocket, but they had never felt the touch of Caveda's fingers. He had a page of writing, but the jest expressed on it was no more than a sound heard in the dark that might be a man's laughter but was as likely to be the meaningless cry of a bird. And he had a photograph. That at least was human. The camera, he was accustomed to say, does not lie. This was the kind of woman, he supposed, that Caveda admired.

The thought puzzled him. For if Caveda had shown any character to his pursuers, save an almost legendary elusiveness and cunning, it was a freedom from the superstitions of the country. Neither Riego nor Quintana in his place would have robbed a priest. It was the kind of joke, he was sure, that the woman of the photograph would not appreciate.

"Do you know this woman?" he asked, taking the photograph from his pocket and offering it to Emilio. The young man treated it with more respect than had the women in the church. He bent and held it so that the glow of the brazier lit the face.

"Is she a friend of yours, señor?" he asked cautiously.

"No," Chase said, "but I am trying to find her in San Juan."

"She looks like a priest's woman," the man said. "I have nothing to do with women like her. I am a Liberal. If you want a woman, señor, I can introduce you to several."

"No," Chase smiled, "I am not at the moment looking for one of that kind."

"Very young. Very beautiful," the young man continued. He did not lick his words like a common pander; his statements had the same serenity as his announcement of political allegiance. The presence of the two old disapproving men did not trouble him; they did not exist for him. Chase existed, to whom he looked up through the red glow of the brazier, his dark face almost beautiful in that disturbing light. They were alone together for a moment with the flames between them, while he offered, with palm

held out and the face in the photograph hidden, something better than a religious woman.

"I'll know where to come," Chase said.

The answer did not satisfy the young man who, straightening, lost the borrowed beauty of the fire and became again a mere talker. It was perhaps, Chase thought, only my own lust which lit his face for me. Even a pimp can be transfigured by lamplight and desire. Probably the caballero, the orator was saying in a tone of disappointment, had friends in San Juan.

"No," Chase said. "I have no friends in this country."

"The more reason for finding the lady, eh?" Emilio inquired, with an amused grimace, of the two old men and turned the photograph towards them. If he meant to anger them with his indecent flippancy he partly succeeded. The two old men leant forward together and stared at the picture.

"If the gentleman is wanting a woman," one said contemptuously, "he had better stay with you, Emilio."

"Do you mean you know her?" Chase asked with an eagerness he did not trouble to disguise. The old man seemed to note the excitement and condemned it behind his shadowed eyes. He shook his head.

"How should I know her?" he said. "But you have only to look at the picture. She has nothing to give you. She cares for God, not for a man," he added with approval.

"I've got nothing to do with that," Chase said.

The other spoke. He seemed a little shy of the much-travelled stranger and twisted his hat in his hands. "The caballero," he said politely, "is ignorant of our women. He would do no good by finding someone like her. He would do much better to go with Emilio."

Chase said, "The picture seems to interest you."

The diffident one peered earnestly across the brazier. "Señor," he said, "I have looked at it, and I have looked at you. You know as well as I do how unlike you are. That always brings unhappiness. I see that with my hens. I have only to look at a cock in the market to tell whether things will go well. You will forgive an old man speaking like this."

Unwillingly Chase was touched. "I am not a cock to her hen," he said. "I only wish to see her for a few minutes. She knows a man I know." The lie was a small one, and it was useless to relieve the old man's feelings.

"I should not, señor." His persistence would have been impertinent if it had not been so ashamed. One could not be angry with a man so conscious of his own intrusion. "Señor," he said, "you are too different. One cannot always confine oneself to a word here or a word there. There are invitations to be given—supper, a glass of wine. It is, as you would say, only polite. But then there are more words, a look, a touch of fingers, the blood is treacherous. You are too different, señor." The word had obviously some deep significance for him; he harped on it; it worried him. Chase watched him knit his brows in a frightened embarrassed perplexity. "You are

much wiser than we are, señor," he continued, descending to an obviously insincere flattery to gain his end, though what his end might be Chase could not tell. "You are very travelled. You are an Englishman. You have been in France, perhaps in Germany. But there are things one learns even in this village." He looked with malice at Emilio. "Things they may not know in San Juan."

Chase said impatiently, "I don't know what you mean." The voice had gone on too long for amusement.

"This, señor. You will only bring unhappiness to her and yourself and your friend."

Chase's hand went to his mouth in astonishment. No huddle of half-known faces fought for the possession of his mind. One figure came towards him from the gloom and the cold; Crane speaking, half amused, half sullen, "I don't know why I'm here. I suppose I wanted to see you." He found his lips formed to reply, "I've been thinking about you a good deal the last few days," but instead he heard his voice speaking sensibly and severely in Spanish. "I don't know what you mean. I have no friend in this country." He regarded the diffident reproachful face with distaste and suspicion. The man was setting up as a fortune-teller, as a thought-reader. It would be unwise to give him any clue. They were sharp, these fellows. No wonder they imposed on the credulous.

"I only meant, señor, the man you say you both know."

So that was all. Chase let out his breath with a

certain relief. He was glad that the thought-reading had been no thought-reading at all. He was a little glad, but unwillingly because the reason partook of superstition, that the prophecy of unhappiness did not refer to Crane. Caveda and the woman were nothing to him.

But the uneasiness remained for a time. It had no basis in reason, and reason could not drive it out. He could tell himself that Crane was in London and that unhappiness to the woman would be a sign of his success. Such arguments lightened his heart less than the gradual withdrawal of the rain on the path that the wind was taking, and his retreat from the glowing brazier and the shadowy room. He left the three men for his horse and the road, and gradually under the influence of regular motion they receded, still talking, still arguing, into those impenetrable depths of the mind where are harboured all infantile lumber, all trivial questions of youth, with all-important but unremembered acts and thoughts, so that a child's toy may lie there side by side in a mutual forgottenness with a friend's betrayal. If occasionally they re-emerge into the light, they have been so changed by their dark imprisonment as to be bleached into a common resemblance, a common virtue.

The rain had stopped and the deep pools of water in the uneven road flamed with sunset, as he came down to the first houses of San Juan. Dark and cold advanced together, lights sprang out in windows and doorways, burning straight and shining vividly, like crystals of hoar frost, and the scattered houses gave place to a long and narrow street. A few people here

and there gossiped in iron balconies, shouting across the road or to the balconies below. A beggar cried from the cobbles, legless, trundling away from the horse's hooves on long arms. A man on a mule came down the street; he reeled in the saddle with weariness, waking at each lurch to stare with dimmed eyes. People called to him from the balconies, laughing and mocking, but before they had finished a jest the man was asleep again. At the bottom of the street a rocket rose a very little way into the air, spluttering damply and exploding into a few green stars. A feast, he thought, the day of some forgotten saint, who was commemorated in the almanacs as an excuse for a holiday and the closing of the shops. It was lucky that he had his room at the inn ready, for all the idle men and children in the neighbouring villages would have swarmed in, to lie on chairs, on floors, on the very stones of the street.

In the square a number of braziers flared, casting a scarlet glow on a wide circle of plane trees and a few rowans. Some officers of the garrison stood in the town hall balcony, occasionally calling out impudently to the women among the crowd. The shadows from lamps and braziers cast curvetting shadows among the baroque ornaments of the façade, so that the mythical beasts seemed to shift their thighs and heads, peering through tropical foliage and clustered fruits. In the courtyard of the inn all the tables were occupied. Indeed so meagre was the entertainment that San Juan, huddled close but not warmly under the mountains, could provide, there was little for anyone to do but stand and talk or sit and drink.

Some indistinguishable member of the crowd, impelled perhaps by a corporate spirit or an uncommon desire to honour obscure sanctity, continued with little success in the damp to let off rockets. One or two meagre stalls showed prizes were to be won with rings or coloured balls of celluloid, and very close to the inn was a rifle range. That was all, save for the shouted impertinencies and the slow dark surge of the crowd. Chase left his horse to the care of a stableman and pushed his way across the courtyard and into the inn.

The moment he saw the innkeeper he knew that something was wrong. She advanced on him with nervous blandness, an ardour of welcome. "Ah, señor, who could believe that we should see you again so soon? I was only saying to my husband this morning how long it seemed . . ." Something without doubt was muddling her.

"My room?" he asked with suspicion.

"Of course we have a room ready for you, señor." Her eyes shifted, became absorbed. It needed less than a journalist's eye to know that she was puzzled, to guess that she was thinking which of her guests to alienate by sending him away without a room.

"I did not ask for any room," Chase said. "My room is ready?"

"Señor, there is a difficulty." She turned on him with what was meant to be a disarming frankness. Through the door came the regular *psst psst psst* of impatient drinkers. Her husband, his arms full of bottles, huddled by, with an effort to avoid Chase's recognition. A rocket spluttered and mounted a little

way, and a green glow fell over the woman's shining expanse of forehead, the large mortuary eyes. The officers on the balcony were becoming louder and more impudent. Crack, crack, crack, a man was shooting in the range at a row of corks balanced on bottles, and occasionally glass broke with a high squeal.

"There can be no difficulty," Chase said. "You know as well as I do that I have taken the room for three months."

"I tried to explain, señor." Psst. Psst. Psst. She shook her great coiffure in annoyance at the rattle and roar of sound. "One cannot hear oneself speak." But that was an exaggeration, for all across the square, like cracked bells, came the voices of the officers. "Look at that filly over there. See her waggle her tail. Come and waggle to us, my girl." Psst. Psst. Psst. And the small pale husband crept by with more bottles, more glasses. One would have thought that, perhaps, after all the Spaniards were a merry enough race and that they only needed a feast day to show their light hearts, but Chase looked with distaste past the woman's broad brow and tumble of vexed curls at the surge of the mob. In France they would have been dancing by now, but here they moved a little this way and a little that, and the sound of them came as a slow mutter of talk. Laughter was isolated, quite detached from the great dark wave, like pieces of blown spume. "My God, I want a woman," a drunken voice carolled from the balcony over the heads of the crowd, and several people laughed, because that was funny, somebody

wanting something which he had not got. I'm beginning to hate this country and these people, Chase thought, and said with all the more restraint, "Are you trying to tell me that someone has my room?"

"Yes, señor, but it is not my fault," the woman said. The rest of her explanation had to follow Chase up the stone steps. He ran quickly, his hate having come at last to a focus. I'll turn the fellow out on his back, he thought. "I tried to explain, señor, but he took no notice. He said he did not understand Spanish." Halfway up the steps she gave up following him. The situation, she must have thought, could be solved only by the two men. Down a long, low-ceilinged passage lined by unpainted doors Chase ran. He flung open a door, and noticed with surprise that it was unlocked. He had expected the intruder to barricade himself into the stolen room. The man stood in front of the mirror. He had a slim figure which gave the impression of being strung on wires. He was brushing his hair and the operation seemed to absorb the attention which should have been aroused by the sudden rude opening of the door. Chase said in Spanish, "What are you doing here? This is my——" He stopped because in the mirror he saw Michael Crane's face.

The first emotion which he felt was not one of welcome. During Crane's slow turn to face him he had time to note the suitcase in one corner, the overcoat flung on a chair, the sponge in the basin. His eyes went from one sign of an intimate presence to

another in hunted fashion. It was fear which he felt. As though the features in the mirror were a face reflected in a wall of rain, intervening time was erased. A mere image had in a flash taken concrete form. Then he heard the old Spaniard talking in a deferential puzzled apprehension. Had the man been a thought reader after all? he wondered. And was it possible for a man, if he could read thoughts, to read the future? Suddenly he wanted to warn Crane. "What are you doing here?" he repeated, this time in English.

"I suppose," Crane said with a smile which did not alter or even touch a certain perplexity in his voice and gaze, "I felt I'd like to see you. Oh, I haven't come all the way from England for that," he added, as though the impulse might put too large a claim on his friend, "I've been in Madrid for the last week or two, and as I knew you were here, I thought I would come." Uneasiness and anger at his own superstition kept Chase silent. Crane said, feeling his way, as it were, towards the core of that silence: "I'm not poaching. I've left my paper." His smile called for an answer. "I'm a man of leisure." When Chase again failed to speak, he said, "One would think you were sorry to see me."

That made an answer necessary. But I cannot tell him, Chase thought, what is in my mind. It is only a foolish, superstitious fear. This country is getting on my nerves. Why did I think of him particularly to-day? But perhaps he has been here a week. There would be no coincidence then. "Have you been here long?" he asked.

"Only a few hours."

But he was still unable to explain the reason of his unwelcoming attitude, the door open behind him and himself only a few inches further into the room than when he had first recognised Crane. It was not that Crane would laugh at him. He knew instinctively that Crane would treat his story with the same degree of seriousness as a threatening letter. It was rather that he was unwilling to admit that he himself could be affected by a coincidence of that kind. He said, "Of course I'm glad to see you. I was surprised. That's all."

They did not shake hands; they knew each other too well; and because no physical movement filled the gap, silence resumed an air of restraint. Crane turned again to the mirror and Chase to his ashamed, uncomfortable thoughts. "I suppose you are annoyed with me," Crane said, "for having taken your room. But it's the only one in the place, and they can bring up another bed. You are not sharing it, I imagine?" he added, his eyes following the course of the brush in the glass.

The remark angered Chase. "Of course not." The emotion was, he knew it, unreasonable, for the attempt of the pimp at the inn had given him nothing but amusement and a dim reflection that, after all, if "things" didn't go well, it might be "fun." He said furiously, "What makes you suggest that? You judge everybody by yourself." So we have begun to quarrel already, another stratum of his mind contained the comment and was saddened a little at the fatality of it and felt pleasure at the companionship of even

strained words. There was no need to be jealous of the three disputants at the inn, for he was no longer isolated in a country of fear, superstition and pain. He was companioned.

"How different we are," Crane said, the words coming as it were from the moving lips in the glass, as if the consciousness of that difference caused him to hold aloof and allow speech to emerge from the mere simulacrum of himself. "I should have thought that a remark like that would annoy anyone," Chase said with bitterness. He added quickly, before the other could reply, "Come and have a glass of wine. You'll need your coat. It's getting cold." It gave him pleasure to advise, to feel that he knew the country better than his friend.

Crane bent to take his coat. When he rose the coat caught a hand-mirror balanced precariously on the lid of his suitcase. It fell and shattered on the floor, the glass reflecting as it broke the blue rays of light from the gas jet and shooting across the ceiling and walls a dozen brief stars that fell into the shadows round the wainscot. "I suppose that frightens you," Chase said in a flare of anger, his voice shaken by the noise. "Oh, no," Crane said, stooping to pick up the pieces. "I'm no more superstitious than you," and the very calmness of his voice held an implication of irony. "The noise made me jump," Chase said. They went downstairs.

In the courtyard of the inn they could find no table free and were forced to share one with two Spaniards, large fat men with big moustaches, citizens of San Juan, dully and dapperly clothed. The

woman came and stood beside the table, arms akimbo, her face bright with relief at finding the two foreigners in agreement. She was ready to talk, but Chase was not. "Put up another bed in my room," he said, "and bring us a bottle of wine." The officers had left the town hall balcony, and the crack and whine of the shooting gallery had ceased. The night would have been quiet if it had not been for the talk of the crowd. This came to them, not as separate conversations, interjections, calls, but as a low thunder of sound, just as the individual shadows were transformed into one black massive block, a darker counterpart of the clouded vault above.

"How terrible it would be," Crane said, "to have a crowd like that against one, looking for one. They move so slowly." From the general he moved with nervous suddenness to the personal. "And I can't understand a word they say."

"How did you get here?" Chase said. "Oh, I have a phrase book. You know the kind of dead impersonal sentences. But even they, you know, take on a poignancy. You can imagine—but I don't suppose you can—the effect of constantly asking, 'Do you speak English?' '¿Habla usted Inglés?' It was weeks before somebody said 'yes' and I tell you I could almost have wept upon his shoulder."

"I don't see the use of coming to a country where you can't speak the language." He became aware of the peculiar quality of Crane's eyes, an expression of offering something defensively, ready to withhold at less than a word, at a look, perhaps a thought. It angered and touched and confused him. "You don't

imagine you can be of use to me?" he asked. "There's an advantage," Crane said. "I'm like a deaf man now. Speech means nothing to me, but I have my sight. The deaf learn to see more clearly than those who hear; just as the blind hear more than those who see." He drained his wine and through the red film clinging to the glass his eyes looked for a moment blood-shot with too much seeing.

Chase laughed. "I wish you could see Caveda for me, then," he said. Crane put down his glass very slowly. "Caveda. Caveda." He seemed to be considering the name. "You've heard of him, surely?" "I can even tell you something about him," Crane said. "Your job will soon be gone. There's a movement against Riego in Madrid. They'll be offering Caveda money and a commission to surrender. A quick end to your war."

"I don't believe he'll take it," Chase said. His conviction was more than half assumed. He did not wish to lose all chance of a "story" and it angered him to hear Crane, a newcomer who could not even speak the language, assume a knowledge he did not himself possess. "I think he's not to be bribed," he said.

"You seem to admire the man." Crane's smile infuriated him. It seemed to ally even his friend with the Spaniards and their reserve of unspoken superiority. Why should I not admire him? he thought. I know more of him than Crane. Haven't I read his letter and seen his woman's photograph and don't I carry his gloves in my pocket? These may seem slender evidences to Riego and Quintana,

but I have the imagination to piece them together into a man. And if I should admire that man . . . You are not the only one with imagination, he silently accused Crane and the face which had already lost its smile. It had been so brief that his own anger was the only proof that it had ever existed. He converted the angry sentence, almost as it left his lips, into an agreement. "Yes, I think I admire the man." He added, because Crane seemed to wait for an explanation, "He's a wonderful fighter. He has only a few hundred men and he's been eluding us in the hills for months. He's lost a dozen men and we must have lost more than forty. I believe he could go on for years." "It can't be so difficult in the mountains," Crane said.

"That's not all. He has courage. I believe he comes down to San Juan itself to see his friends. It's true that we have no picture of him, but anyone might betray him." It was as though the wine and companionship had waited till that moment for their effect, and suddenly he was both warm and happy. "I'm glad you are here, Crane," he said. For the first time the man with the rockets had a success. Perhaps the cold mountain air had dried at last the remnants of the rain. Towards a moon like a fragment of blue-white ice between the gusts of cloud a green light soared and burst and swept in a shower of gold down towards the dark, Danæ pastures of the lower air. In the illumination the crowd for a few seconds lost its anonymity, became a rapid succession of faces lifted with a kind of glad astonishment to the radiance in the sky—an old man with a scarred

forehead; a woman with withered, wind-swept skin and a mouth frozen into reluctant mirth; beside the shooting booth a pale girl who looked up for less time than the lights took to fall before she turned her gaze with despairing excitement at her companion, who never raised his face from the sights of his rifle; a priest who passed through the crowd with skilful knife-like tread. "Caveda may be here now. He might be anyone," Chase said. Crack, crack, crack, the man at the booth began again to shoot, his marks now lit only by a confusing smoky flame. "I suppose rewards have been offered?" Crane asked. "Yes, they don't betray each other, these Spaniards." It was very reluctant praise. To take away the taste of it, he felt for a cigarette and in doing so withdrew from his pocket the photograph of Caveda's friend.

Without a smile Crane said, "So you know a woman after all?"

Chase laughed. That was an accusation which could not touch him. One had only to look at the face, he thought, to see how foolish the implication was. Already he began to hate the woman for her ignoble though unconscious mission of betrayal. It was a pity that Caveda could not fall through a finer agency. "Look," he said. "Can you imagine me with anyone like that?" Crane took the photograph. He did not speak for some time. He had grown accustomed apparently, like a deaf man, to study a face with care. At last he said: "She's beautiful. She's very beautiful."

"To a priest," Chase protested with astonishment.

"To anyone," Crane said.

"I don't see it."

"I shouldn't expect you to." Crane leant his chin upon his hands with an expression of weariness. For a long time Chase waited for an explanation, an excuse, a reason for the harshness of the words. At last he said: "I don't pretend to know anything about women." He took the photograph from the table and put it back in his pocket. "Who is she?" Crane asked with reluctance.

"I wish I knew. She's a friend of Caveda." In a moment the face opposite him lost its lassitude. Crane repeated with astonishment: "A friend of Caveda?"

"You wouldn't expect it, would you? She's not the sort of person to appeal to that type of man, rash, free-thinking."

"Oh, she would appeal to any man, I think," Crane said. "It's his appeal to her that astonishes me." "There must be some good in her, you mean?" "No, I mean there must be something bad in her after all," he said. He let his hands fall upon the table and said with a vehemence that consorted oddly with the tired face, "How hopelessly weary one gets of that rottenness at the centre. Even here."

It was the last two words which astonished Chase. He could understand a man feeling like that after a week in Spain, but what else did he expect of the country?

"You have curious ideas," he said. He added with a slow pain, because there was no one he would have more liked to understand: "I shall never share

them. Never." It seemed that only for brief moments could their minds touch, as in those seconds' space when the rocket soared. It was the joy of those moments that supplied the after-pain and in a sense made it worth while. Now they were as far away as they had ever been—not a bottle of red wine and two glasses and a table between them, but a long tunnel of space and time, at the end of which Crane's face showed none of the small lines and features that made it human and the voice was toneless with distance.

At his own end of the tunnel Chase spoke, with reluctance because it was useless to be angry with someone so distant, useless to attempt to give pain. "You should be at home in Spain," he said. "Yes, I should be," the voice agreed, and I might have known, Chase thought, that I would hurt myself, not him. He rose and said with crude anger, "I can't stay talking any longer. I've got my message to write. I suppose I shall see you at dinner."

"I suppose so," Crane said. "Will you lend me that photograph?" Chase's fingers found it and bent it, longing to tear. Only a certain loyalty to his paper prevented him. Are you getting hold of my friend already? he addressed in mind the contemptuous face. Even in his friend too was to be found, it seemed, the rottenness at the centre, so that Crane was ready to run after the strange woman, like a dog at a bitch's tail. His thoughts were interrupted by Crane's explanation: "I should like to help you. You mean that if you can find this woman you can find Caveda?"

I don't blame you, Chase thought. Why can't you be frank and tell me your appetite's roused? I will be your pimp, never fear. He dropped the photograph upon the table and went silently upstairs.

The message he had to send was an unsatisfactory one, and it needed some hours of dull and puzzled work before he had lent importance to a very minor engagement. Crane was not in the dining-room when he entered it. The bare wooden table, which stretched across the room almost from the great fireplace to the door, had only two occupants, Spaniards, whose faces were vaguely familiar to him. When they greeted him with smiles and courteously shifted their fat thighs, he recognised them as the two men who had shared the table in the courtyard. "Thank you," he said, "but I will wait for my friend," and he turned his back and held his hands to the flame and glow and crackle of the fire. A great log split and settled, and a jet of heat struck him in the face and gilded all the walls. The shadows of the three men shifted and changed and shot across the ceiling, till the dark heads met in an effect of intimacy which one at least of the three living men did not feel. "Your friend has gone into the town, señor," a voice said behind Chase's back, and two of the heads nodded and nuzzled the third. "I'm in no hurry," Chase replied, surrendering none of himself, capitulating not the least to the suggestion of the shadows.

"He will be some time away, I think," one of the Spaniards said. "He is visiting a friend at the other end of the town." "The soup is good," said the other.

They seemed to share a courteous determination to bring him to the table and make him eat. At least they made him turn to face them. He was a little puzzled. "He told me he could speak no Spanish. How do you know all this?" One of the men leant his spoon against the side of his plate and began to crumble a great hunk of bread. His thick moustache, after contact with the soup, was like a hedgerow spangled with dew. A big signet ring glittered in the firelight with the movement of his fingers. "He had a photograph with him," he said, "of a lady whom I know well. He seemed to notice that I recognised it. He pointed here and there at this house and at that and raised his eyebrows so." The brows rose in a magnificent arch. Chase smiled: "And how did you explain?" He hoped that he had shown no excitement. "I drew a plan for him on the back of the picture," the man explained with a rather ponderous pride, leaning back and placing his hands flat on the table, nodding his head as much as to say, And would you believe it?

Chase turned again to the fire and stirred a log with his foot, feignedly negligent. I had never expected so speedy a success, he thought. And yet why not? San Juan is a small town. Everyone is a neighbour and no one is a stranger. He said carelessly, as though the subject interested him little and he was talking only for the sake of courtesy: "I've seen the picture. Is the lady married?"

There had been, he soon found, no need to feign indifference. His companions were prepared to enlighten a stranger with the private lives of any in-

habitant of San Juan. In such a town there were no curtains, no walls, no darkness capable of hiding a secret, a characteristic, an intimacy. Señorita Monti was unmarried. She was past her first youth, indeed in two months she would be twenty-six years of age. They enlightened him with the minutest details. In San Juan there was no chance of a secret intrigue, no pleasure could be stolen and left unpaid for at the end. A priest knew no more of his flock than a neighbour knew of his neighbour. Even so, Chase thought, he has not mentioned Caveda.

"Her father and mother, are they alive?" Her mother, with a slight raising of the left eyebrow and a glitter of the left eye, was most assuredly alive. Too much alive, some would say. She came from the south and that explained a good deal. Her weekly confession sometimes took as long as half an hour. He had noticed it himself while waiting his turn with impatience and wishing like a good business man that all the world were virtuous. But who was he to object? Her husband did not care. "Then he's alive?" "It depends," the business man pointed out with what he evidently imagined to be an admirable exactitude, "what you mean by alive." "The windy side of the grave," Chase said with amusement. "He's alive," the Spaniard said, "unless you call a small dark room and books, books, books, with no visitor but the priest, a grave." Yes, he was a scholar, but what use was there in scholarship if it did not supply enough money to keep a family in comfort and provide a dowry for a daughter? They lived in a big shabby house at the unfashionable end of the town.

"And that's where your friend has gone," he concluded.

"And the daughter?" Chase asked, pushing the fellow on to dive again into a sea of intimate scandal. "Ah, you should ask my friend about her." He fluttered his signet ring in the other's direction, who began to grouse thickly through his soup of dowries and cold women. "He wanted to marry her," his friend explained, glancing across the table with affectionate contempt, "But he wouldn't take her without a dowry. Ah, it was a disappointment, wasn't it? You remember the bed you bought?"

"And was she willing?" Chase asked. "Her mother was," the other said. In fact her mother had been the moving spirit from the start, and her enthusiasm had in some sort compensated for the daughter's lack of it. Not that a man objected to a certain coldness in his future wife, and the mother herself could have done with more reserve. She had said no word about any difficulty over the dowry until the very last moment. "Luis here," his friend said with enjoyment, "turned up one morning with his lawyer, pen, ink, paper, everything required for a marriage except the priest, and he would have arranged with him the next morning. Do you think she could give a single peseta with her daughter? Not she." "But how had she hoped——" "That was the cunning of it. She'd left them alone together a great deal, and she had talked to Luis about her daughter's beauty, letting slip, as a mother may, little intimate things that excite a man. She thought she would have Luis's appetite so roused that he'd take the daughter with-

out a dowry." The fat man laughed and poked a finger towards his equally fat companion. "She didn't know Luis. I could have warned her. He walked straight out of the house with his lawyer behind him, carrying pens, ink, paper and all, and he's never been back. Why, he's even sold the big bed he bought."

"That's untrue," his friend muttered through the soup.

It was an amusing story and seemed to bring that intolerant face down to the level of fat fingers, flashing signet rings, greasy moustaches. She might find the world not good enough for her, but she had been rejected by Luis. He felt almost affection towards those two fat mercenary men. He could regard them with friendly contempt like fat boys in a story. Temporarily they filled his world with their bulk as they filled the room with their shadows, transforming it to something merry, coarse and below himself in intelligence. He stood above them in Olympian amusement, but for a moment only, before that world was shattered by an alien and veracious presence. The door opened and Crane entered. It hurt him a little to realise how unwelcome his friend was with his face of complex wisdom, made up of doubt, nerves, fear.

"Well," Chase asked, "have you found what you were looking for?" He saw Luis examining Crane's expression with a business man's fear of a mistake. Has this stranger, he was evidently thinking, been arranging for a dowry? The lack of enthusiasm in the answer, though the words were foreign, must have

reassured him. "I found the house," Crane said. He sat down at the table and pulled towards him the great tureen of soup.

"Did you go in?"

"How could I go in? What excuse had I got?" he answered irritably. "You've told me nothing about this woman." The sharp reply would normally have received a sharper answer, but Chase still reproached himself for the realisation of how unwelcome his friend could be. His silence must have amazed Crane, who knew how the other based his friendship on badgering and quarrels. He said, "I'm sorry. It was not your fault. I was afraid to go in." The two Spaniards finding there was no hope of sharing in the conversation, of which they could understand no word, fell to their dinner. The more communicative picked reproachfully at a piece of boiled fowl.

"What do you mean?" Chase asked. "Why were you afraid?"

"What do I always fear?" Crane burst out with a nervous gesture of the hands and eyes that begged to be reassured. "Danger, pain." He hesitated and added "Death" softly, his eyes no longer seeking another's response but clouding with thought.

"What was there to fear?" Chase did not so much ask as chide, pity bringing back with it affection. He put his hand out across the table, but it was rejected. "You mustn't take me too seriously," Crane said. "Listen. I'll tell you about the house." And he began to talk rapidly, apparently unaware of the withdrawal of the hand.

"It's a big house with two balconies one above the

other. It must be an old house, late seventeenth century, I should say. There's a lot of carving over the door, a griffin peers out of leaves at you, and there's a date and initials, but you can't distinguish them."

"I'm not interested in the architecture," Chase said. Crane paid him no attention. "I dare say it was once a rich street—a hundred and fifty years ago, but things have been allowed to slide. Money, I suppose, is scarce up here, and fifty years of Carlist wars can't have mended matters. The street's almost unlighted. There's a lamp at one end, and another over the door of the house. That distinguishes it from all the other houses. One can tell even in the dark that paint has been needed for years."

"You see too much," Chase said. "You don't distinguish."

"But then it's better to see than to be seen." The readiness of his reply, his volubility, gave an impression of nervousness. "I saw more than the architecture too. What would have been the use if I had rung the bell? Should I have shown the photograph and made signs that I wanted to meet the original?" He pushed his plate on one side and made no effort to help himself from another dish. "I should not have found her," he said.

"How could you tell that from outside?" Chase asked with resentment.

"I was only there for two or three minutes," Crane said, "standing in the dark. The light from the street lamp couldn't reach me, and the lamp above the door only showed a couple of steps and a few feet of

cobbles. So one must admit that it was luck." The gleam of intelligence, the desire to communicate with another, went out of his eyes, and they became expressionless. He seemed not thoughtful but asleep, coiled in unmemorable and unintelligible dreams. "What was luck?" Chase asked impatiently and was rewarded by a returning light.

"Of course, didn't I tell you? I saw her. But was it luck? Think how unlikely it was that I should see her. I was only in front of the house three minutes. And again how unlikely it was that I should have found the house to-night." "Yes, it was lucky," Chase said.

"But then you don't believe in fate. If you believe in fate like I do, it makes coincidences of that kind so terribly important. She appeared in front of the house quite suddenly. I hadn't seen her because of the dark, and she must have been treading softly."

"Do you mean she was on tiptoe?" Chase asked. "Oh, no. I think she must quite naturally move quietly. A man went into the house with her."

"What was he like?" Chase asked with such excitement that two large fat faces were raised to his.

"I couldn't see his face. He was a large man. Not old."

"It might . . . Of course one can't tell," Chase said softly.

"But then, if it weren't he, why should I have been there in that one moment of all moments? It couldn't have been purposeless."

"It may have been coincidence," Chase said, disregarding entirely both the confidence and the fear

which had been combined in Crane's statement. "How you can have lived for thirty years," Crane said, "and still believe in a thing like that I can't understand. Is it a coincidence that I'm here?"

"No, you wanted to come."

"Wanting's not enough," Crane said. "Yes, I wanted to see you. You've been away for two years. But I couldn't have come now at this moment when—admit it—I've been of use to you, if my mother had not died a few months ago and left me a little money."

"I'm sorry," Chase said.

"You've no need to be, nor have I. You know I always disliked her. She was a part of England, though, insensitive, a little vulgar, grasping."

"I liked her," Chase said. "I found her interesting. One could rely on her." "As you can't rely on the son," Crane interrupted.

"I don't understand you, that's all." He hesitated and added with reluctance, "Can you describe her?" "My mother?" "No, no, the woman." "It was dark," Crane said. "I couldn't see her distinctly."

"You mean you didn't look, that you were afraid to come out of the shadow." Irritation budded in the mind and broke into a strange flower of anger, neither wanted nor expected. It flourished its broad malevolent petals before a face that cared as little as it understood, or else understood too much to care. Crane said with a kind of humility: "It wasn't that sort of fear. Not then. I didn't want to see her at that moment. Off her guard." He added with melan-

choly: "There'll be a hundred chances soon. What does the delay of a few hours matter?"

The flower began to wither from lack of nourishment. Anger became in a few seconds' space little more than a sense of dissatisfaction and pain. Again I don't understand, Chase thought. It was as though a light served only to emphasise the bounds of illumination in a dark vista. I don't feel this with others, he thought, and wondered for a moment whether with others it was only that he did not care, that himself was sufficient. Pain assumed an appearance of patience and he said, "Off her guard? What do you mean by that?" There was no accusation of crudity in Crane's answer, nothing that might indicate that he saw in Chase less than the one person alive he could trust: "Didn't I say that there must be something rotten in her if she loves a man like Caveda? I don't want to see that first. I want to see her as she is in the picture."

"Why do you object so to Caveda?"

Crane smiled. "I might answer," he said, "loyalty to you, who, after all, are helping to track him down. But I think there's nothing in the world more detestable than a man who fights only for his own hand, so that men are shot to ensure him a bribe and a commission."

"You've no proof of it," Chase said.

"His enemies think so, and enemies generally know each other well. Better than friends do. He wants reinstatement, and so men must die to get it him. Men must starve because he needs money. Have you collected catchwords from a local poli-

tician? I suppose they'll tell you Caveda is a Liberal? I wonder you don't join him."

"If it was not for my paper," Chase said. He stopped in time, and said more soberly, "My position is in a No Man's Land. I want news, that's all."

"And I've brought you news," Crane said. "What are you going to do about it?"

"What can I do?" Chase asked. "You've seen a man, that's all. It may be her father. I can't go to the commandant with news like that." He said with a passion that surprised himself, "I must be sure of him. I must be sure," and knew that he meant not Caveda so much as Crane himself, sure that he would not see him receding for ever into the shadowland of spirits and beliefs he could not share. He remembered what he had said, that enemies knew themselves better than friends. If I were your enemy, he thought, would I find it easier to read your thoughts? Should I treasure scraps of your writing, your gloves, the photographs of your friends and study them to forestall you? Should I know what now I do not know, the pattern of your speech, so that I could hear your words before you spoke them? Should I, he thought, his mind divided between Crane and Caveda, begin even to share your beliefs? But he could not avoid the question—what to do? He said, "I'll get into the house somehow. I can learn then if Caveda is there." But he still hesitated. "After all I'm not a combatant. I'm a journalist only. It seems to be taking almost too definite a side."

Then the thought of the story, of the position that it would win for him on his paper, the justification of

his protracted stay in Spain, conquered his reluctance. "We had better go at once," he said and rose from the table. Across the board his friend's body rose at the same time but slowly, like a retarded image of himself.

"You mustn't come with me into the light," Chase whispered, pausing at the edge of darkness. A lamp burned from an iron bracket above a door, casting a shadowy caricature of its artistry upon the steps and cobbles. Delicate iron flowers became on the uneven ground ridged and elongated plants, which stretched long stems towards the territory of night which parted them from the glow and shadow at the end of the street. Above, a dusty radiance illuminated the carving of the walls. A griffin peered out of a peeling façade, from which great blossoms of stone seemed to drink an arid substitute for sunlight. Among the cobbles grasses grew, sensitive leaves wavering in the illumination, losing their green for gold where the light was strongest, beaten on by a breeze. The wind along the street in the dark could be felt, but in the light became visible in the shivering of the grass and the shifting of the lamp's flame; then where the brightness faded it vanished, and was invisible as it was silent, where it passed along the tall house-fronts.

"Don't be long," Crane said. Chase heard the voice shake a little, and he promised quickness.

"And if you find Caveda there, see him, speak to him?"

"Why then, he'll have a face," Chase said, "I'll

know him again." He was about to step from the darkness when Crane put a hand upon his arm. "Did you hear something? I thought I heard something move." "A dog." "Something whisper." They stayed and listened. Where they were the darkness was too complete for them to see each other. Chase felt a warm breath upon his face, as Crane put his lips close to speak. "He may have friends here, watching too." That suggestion did not frighten Chase. He was not afraid of physical action. Indeed he would have welcomed it. He was tired of being left with his thoughts, slow-moving, painful, uncertain. He heard the whisper then, and almost as quickly the explanation swooped, climbed, fluttered into view. Two bats entered the realm of light. They were like dancers who appear before the footlights in the act of performance as the curtain rises, arms extended, muscles taut, in the imitation of sexual ecstasy. But with the bats it was no imitation but the ecstasy itself. On a nuptial flight the square leather wings whispered and beat, the membranes shining, the long ears pricked. Slowly they flapped against each other, poking with rat noses, the coarse cobwebbed fur meeting and parting and meeting again, and so into the dark, oblivious in their dream of the attraction of light. "It's nothing," Chase whispered and, extending a hand to his companion to hold him to his place, found him as taut and strung as the cord of a bow. "It's nothing," he whispered again, and when there was no response, he added, "Listen. If you like, we'll wait till daylight. We'll go back, warm ourselves, have a drink.

It's not fair to you to leave you in the cold while I go in there," and "there" was all the questionable interior behind the unpainted wall and the griffin and the stone flowers. He was aware of what a story might live, move, whisper, speak there, but he was ready to abandon it.

"No. I'm all right. Go in," Crane said. When Chase still hesitated to leave him, he added, "It's too late to stop. Somebody may have seen you. Look at your shadow." Chase had not realised how far he had emerged into the light and found it hard to recognise himself in that foreshortened hunched replica which faded behind him into the dark. It might have been a stranger, standing in a balcony above and casting with menace or warning a shadow at his feet. "Keep close to the wall," he said, and mounting two shallow steps, he knocked upon the door. The sound prolonged itself in echoes all down the narrow street and behind the door also, as if it sought a human being through many empty rooms. He felt himself very prominent and alone, raised above the level of the street and standing where the light was strongest. Staring back into the darkness from which he had emerged he could see no one. He knocked again and as the train of echoes died a shutter clattered up many houses away. From within he heard footsteps running, the sound growing slowly down long passages. Then without the warning of turning key or rattling bolt the door swung open. A tall, thin, grey-faced woman called to him breathlessly, "What do you want?"

"I want to speak to Señorita Monti," Chase said.

He knew that the request sounded unreasonable at that hour from a stranger and he would have felt no surprise if the woman had closed the door in his face. Instead she watched him with an expression made up of alternating hope and disappointment. He went on, "Tell her that, though I am a stranger, I know well a friend of hers and that I have important news both for her and him."

The woman said unexpectedly, "I am Señora Monti," and stood waiting for further words, watching him with a bright sidelong gaze.

"You must think it very strange that I should want to speak to your daughter," Chase began slowly, trying to obtain time for thought. "I should, of course, have come first to you. The strangeness," he went on, more and more formal on the surface, more and more puzzled beneath it, "must be excused by the urgency——" He was interrupted. "Why should I think it strange?" the woman said. "Isn't it natural?" she added cryptically, and suddenly throwing back her head like a restive mare emitted a single laugh, high, metallic, peculiarly suited to the bright knowing eyes, the almost steel-grey skin. She seemed to wait for something, perhaps for an answer, although her meaning had been too obscure for a reply. At last she said, "Do you want to see her on the step? Wouldn't inside the house, inside a room, suit you better? I'll bring you to her."

He followed her down a long unlighted passage. To answer the door she had run impetuously; now she walked slowly; perhaps, Chase thought, if I could see her face, I would know it to be thoughtfully.

Where his shoes had worn thin towards the toes he could feel the stone flags damp and cold. At the end of the passage, facing the entrance, was a door. She opened it and stepped aside for him to enter. In the blue light of the gas and the orange of a fire they glanced at each other, mutually curious. It was not, he found, only her face which was grey. Her hair at the roots was nearly silver, abruptly changing to a deep, tawny brown. "You are a foreigner?" she asked, her lowered appealing voice turning the formal question into something intimate, delicate, as though she wished to know the progress of a secret and perhaps disgraceful disease. "English," he said. To his disappointment the room was empty. Señora Monti followed him and closed the door behind her.

"And where did you meet my daughter?" she asked. He said impatiently, "I've told you already I'm a stranger. A mutual friend . . ."

"Oh yes," she interrupted. "You've heard of her. Talked of her. Perhaps a photograph." "Certainly I've seen a photograph," he said, hoping that the admission would somehow lessen the strangeness of the visit, a strangeness of which the woman seemed peculiarly unaware. "Then you will understand," she said, "my pride as a mother." She approached him till their bodies almost touched and for the first time it occurred to Chase, watching the glitter of the eyes and the slow caressing movement of the lips, that perhaps he had to deal with a mind unhinged. "My daughter is very beautiful," she said, "very chaste," she dwelt a little on the word and added

luxuriously, but vindictively, "she would make a fine mother." Chase drew back, feeling himself touched on the side by her thin thigh. He had never met a woman before who so combined an extreme emaciation with such an impression of the flesh. It was as if she had grown thin from the constant friction of indulgence. Her acceptance of his visit now became clear to him. No strangeness could seem odd to that contorted mind that lived with strangenesses. Out of such a mother what a daughter it must be, he thought with revolt, and wondered what fate had brought Caveda into that household. Aloud he said, "I want to see your daughter at once. It's urgent." He was no longer afraid that he would betray himself by the oddity of his requests.

"Won't you meet her father?" she asked. "Of course," she added quickly, as if she really feared that he might accept the invitation, "he's very busy. He works half into the night. I can't stop him." She laughed at some meaning which Chase did not trouble to seek. He said with some impatience and brutality, "Do you think I'm here to marry your daughter? I've only come to warn her. The police . . ." he had not heard the door open; a more primitive instinct made him turn his eyes over his shoulder to see Señorita Monti herself. She faced him as she had faced him in the photograph, with an unbearable air of rectitude. She was without movement, the door did not swing upon its hinge; Crane was right, he thought, she moves very quietly. But he need have no fear of taking her off her guard. That pale, confident mask, he thought, has been worn

long enough to fit her like nature's face. The "something rotten" was buried deep enough to be invisible to the eye. When she knew that he had seen her, she asked her mother, "Who is he?"

"My dear, he's come to call. He says he knows a friend——"

"Come to call?" she repeated incredulously. She was more easily astonished than her mother, lived, it seemed, less with strangeness, was more quickly able to perceive an incongruity. "At this hour?"

"My dear, he's impetuous," Señora Monti said, "A photograph," she curved her face down towards her daughter and flung the words out like an insult. Then she laughed again, brightly metallic. Her daughter, if she understood the insult, ignored it. Still standing where she had first appeared to him, as if to advance would admit him to an undesirable intimacy, she said, "I heard you say something about the police. What have you come here for?"

Chase examined her well before he spoke. He was anxious to lose none of the effect of his words. It was important, therefore, that he should see her first as she was. I must be impartial, he thought, not even dislike must blind me to her quality. She was very like the photograph. In her case there was no deliberate lie, but inevitably the picture had stolen life, and it was life, the pale ivory of the skin, the touch of bronze shadow in the black hair, the green of the eyes, that lent the features beauty.

Chase said with a dislike which he saw no reason to hide, "I have told your mother already—to warn you." She watched him cautiously. He could not tell

whether she adopted her attitude to repel an undesirable advance or to guard herself from someone she believed to be crazed. "To warn me?" she repeated in a low voice, as though the words meant nothing to her, were a meaningless cypher which could yet procure her time. Time was something which he believed she valued and he was glad of the opportunity to rob her of it. But he stopped on the point of speech. He thought that he heard footsteps in the passage, passing the room, going towards the door and the street. Momentarily forgetting caution and the part that he played he took a step towards the door, but Señorita Monti stood in front of it and gave no sign of a willingness to withdraw.

"Who was that?" he exclaimed. "What, señor?" she asked. "I heard nothing." I have gained one thing from her, he thought: civility. That must be typical of her, for all the appearance of virtue. She will despise me at the first sight because I am a foreigner and a heretic and a man. Yes, that too. But as soon as she fears me, she becomes polite. "A man passed," he said. Her mother, who had been silent for some time, content to watch the two of them in an encounter which perhaps she preferred to consider amorous, tittered. "A man," she repeated.

"What man could it be?" Señorita Monti asked, "unless my father?" Her speech was a mistake, and almost as soon as she had uttered the words, she showed regret for them by turning to her mother and pretending without success that she had answered her and not admitted a stranger's right to question. Her strategy was too obvious to succeed. Chase

began to feel his supremacy. There was no wit and little cunning in Señorita Monti, he thought, and the ability to despise her mentality made him judge her appearance more fairly. There was no doubt that she had a kind of beauty.

He said, "I thought it might be my friend," and added after a perceptible pause, "Caveda." He had expected a hasty denial, but she said nothing, and her silence forced him to speak. "You can't pretend that you haven't heard of Caveda," he protested, and immediately regretted his speech and dignified her evasion with a fencer's term—"Riposte." But like a chivalrous dueller who lets fall his sword before his opponent's open defence, she took no advantage. But then, he thought, she is not fighting for herself. He had no wish to be chivalrous. He was fighting to win and not to gain time. He said with haste: "I am Caveda's friend. I came here to warn him that the police know he is in San Juan."

Perhaps she had expected some forbearance equal to her own. It was as if he had sent the bright sword flying from her hand. She took a step forward and cried at him as over a great distance, "You are lying. You know that you are lying." She was distracted. She left the door unguarded and approached her mother, one hand to her mouth, supporting it to bear the effort of speech. "Who is he, mother? Tell me who he is." The woman laughed in her face. It was a cruelty which even Chase, who disliked the girl, would not have committed. "Doesn't he want to marry you like the others?" she cried, and suddenly stamping her foot in a kind of jealous rage,

"Shall I tell him your dowry?"

Señorita Monti said to Chase with a humility which surprised him: "Señor, take no notice of my mother. She is ill. Have you nothing to show that you are Señor Caveda's friend?"

A risk had then to be taken. Minutes had passed since he had heard the footsteps going to the door, and he could not leave Crane too long alone to follow Caveda. He was thankful for his foresight in bringing the photograph. It was possible of course that Caveda might have learnt already of the capture of his mail and told the girl, but there was no other way of gaining her confidence. Even the character which he must give Caveda had to be guessed. He held out the photograph. "He told me that this would always lead me to him in San Juan. It's a copy of one he received only yesterday." She did not take the photograph. "Did he say that?" she asked, and he thought her voice a little bitter, "that it would always lead you——? But if you are his friend, how you must have laughed at the joke." That remark was beyond his understanding, but he tried not to show his bewilderment. Then he realised that Caveda's glove was hanging from his pocket. He had disturbed it in his effort to find the photograph and she had seen it. She looked up slowly and said, "The joke? What am I saying? Perhaps you don't understand the joke. That glove——" He interrupted defensively, on guard against a vague menace, realising for the second time a certain cunning behind the apparently wild thrusts of his enemy. His defence became a hasty series of counter-thrusts. "What do you mean?"

These are my gloves."

"They are very like his," she said. "Is he as generous with gloves as with photographs?" She did not trouble to hide her belief in his deceit. Chase said hurriedly, "I had them copied. One can, you know, always trust his taste in such things." He added boldly (but after all had he not the letter to go by?), "He is very fond of clothes." "Yes, he is fond of clothes," she repeated, and waited suspiciously for him to continue. He made a rasher thrust. "Some people may sneer," he said, "but I admire his elegance. His care for his shoes. His scent——" She interrupted him with another maddening repetition. It irritated him by making him uneasy. The woman seemed devoid of words. She stole those of others and used them at second-hand with no attempt to disguise her recognition of their shabby inadequacy. Now he was forced to qualify himself and it depressed him like a retirement after a bold march into the territory of an enemy. "I mean, of course," he said, "the scented wax he uses on his letters. It's wonderful how he keeps so civilised among the hills."

"Yes, he is wonderful," she said, "in his way."

"Why should he be in any other way?" Chase protested. Such a woman, he thought, should know her good fortune in having Caveda for her lover. Her grudging praise would have angered him little more if he had really been Caveda's friend. The quickness and sincerity of his retort nearly convinced her. She said, "Oh, believe me, señor, I should like to trust you. Is the danger to him urgent?" "Urgent," Chase said. "Then make me believe you," she cried at

him, her eyes not meeting his but wavering over the gloves with hopeless indecision. "Isn't there some sign?" she implored, like the Sadducees who feared and disbelieved, then added slowly in a low voice, "He trusts me. I mustn't betray him." It seemed to Chase an odd reason to give. It would have sounded more natural, he thought, if she had referred to her love rather than to his trust. He said impatiently, "If you want to help him you had better tell me where he is to be found." It was more than he had ever meant to ask.

Señora Monti pulled at his sleeve. He turned to meet her bright eyes and emaciated face. She said vindictively, "Are you a fool, señor? Can't you guess where a man like that is to be found?" "My mother knows nothing," Señorita Monti said with quick anger. "You will learn nothing from her." Her eyes fell again to his pocket and unexpectedly and quite humbly she said to him, "Señor, will you put on your gloves?"

He protested, "I came here to help you both, and now you suspect me of robbing my friend, perhaps of murdering him, in order, I suppose, to wear his gloves." He looked at her covertly and added with an intensity which he had not consciously intended, "I've done with you then altogether." Immediately after he had spoken and as he moved towards the door in what he conceived a mere final bluff, he had the sense of a sudden loss, as if he had really renounced something, but something for which he cared. She said, "You ask a good deal of me, señor. Won't you do that?" On an impulse, to mock her

with his own careless self-betrayal (you have told me enough for my purposes, you may know now you have been deceived) he took the gloves from his pocket and drew them on.

They fitted him. Señorita Monti showed no surprise. She had been ready, even anxious, to believe, but Chase himself had expected no such support for his deceit. How easily everything is going, he thought, with a kind of distaste. If I were superstitious, if I were one of these, I might believe the devil was behind me. But after all, gloves, if loosely cut, fit many hands. "You see," he said, "they are mine."

He never knew to what speech that small symbol was about to drive her, whether she intended to disclose Caveda's whereabouts. Certainly she seemed in all the tensivity of her body to be moved to take a decisive risk, but she was interrupted by a distant explosion. Chase used it to reinforce his claim. "You've delayed too long," he said. "Didn't you hear that shot?" She said briefly, listening through her speech and with face half turned to the window, "A rocket." It was a plausible answer, and Chase secretly accepted it. He was surprised only by the uniqueness of the explosion. Then, as all three of them kept an anxious or an interested silence, in which the liquid lapping of the flames in the fireplace seemed as loud as the sound of a great animal drinking, they became aware of the quiet aftermath. It was as though their discussion had proceeded before a background of distant talk, of the innumerable voices of the fair, and what had silenced them had silenced the whole place. Why should all noise

have ceased, Chase thought, at the successful flight of a rocket? and as he wondered sounds returned, very loud after the silence.

"That wasn't a rocket," Chase said doubtfully, but it was the girl who acted, passing him, flinging open the door, and running into the passage. Chase followed her, to see above her shoulder the advancing flame of a candle which spilt a velvet light over a tall figure and a thin shaven face. "Father," Señorita Monti said, "did you hear?" The man halted and peered forward uncertainly, tilting the candle so that the wax fell and sizzled on the flags. "Is your mother here?" he asked doubtfully. "There seems to be trouble in the town." "Yes, I am here," the woman said, and her pert voice speaking just behind him startled Chase. He hovered indecisively on the verge of some action, hemmed in now by strangers. The expression "hemmed in," he thought, through his own embarrassment, applicable to the girl also. Señorita Monti had run into the passage, the street her obvious aim, driven by anxiety to violent action, however useless. Now she was brought to a stand in front of her tall worried father, behind her a mother who seemed more like the crazy enemy of both of them. It was strange to think how years before these two had come together to beget her in some kind of mistaken ecstasy, and in the struggle of their difference had produced too this scene, the dark house and the hidden motives, the passage with its hesitations, anxieties and fear.

"Did the sound wake even you?" Señora Monti said.

"I was not asleep. I was reading." Chase might not have existed for all the old man cared in his perturbation. "What can I do?"

"You can say your Rosary. Go on reading your Saints," she commanded.

"I could put up the bolts."

"Yes, put up the bolts," Señora Monti said, coming forward a little from the doorway, her neck craning forward in its habitual attitude. "Nobody need come in," she continued, "and nobody need go out." Before the old man could move to obey her, Chase said, "I must go out." "You least of all, surely," the woman said with her cryptic sidelong gaze.

"And I," her daughter broke in, "I will not stay here ignorant. If you are afraid, any of you——" She did not finish her sentence but stood defiant and sparkling in the candlelight. Unwillingly Chase found himself admiring her. Certainly she had courage and certainly too she had a kind of beauty and a kind of loyalty. These qualities, he supposed, had brought Caveda to her. In San Juan he might have found it hard to combine all these in a single person, and such a one, however qualified by unattractive virtues, must have been an oasis of reliability and peace to an outcast.

"My dear," the elderly man said, "we are not afraid. It is only your safety we want. I'll go myself." The light swung round his head and haloed him. "I'll go and find out for you," he added, treading with false and valiant alacrity down the passage. Chase caught him up. "There's no need for you to leave the house," he said. "It was only a rocket." He had already

reached the door and his hand was on the great iron key. "A rocket? Perhaps you are right." His face lit with relief and his eyes travelled back along the passage to the door of his room, to the chair, the fire and the bookshelves and all the saints. Then he looked down from his height at Chase with dubiety. He evidently thought that he had been too easily persuaded. "No," he said, "perhaps I had better go. Even if it is only——" The sentence was unfinished, for all of them were suddenly jerked into stillness by, not this time a single noise, but a flood of sounds. It was as though a herd of cattle had stampeded. The door shook at the rush and hurry of hooves and voices flung back and forth over the tossing of invisible heads. Then the noise swept by and out of hearing, first the metallic clatter fading and last, a command. "The soldiers from the barracks," Señora Monti said.

Chase pushed the old man aside and opened the door. The street was empty and it seemed that that dark body which had rushed swiftly and purposefully by had taken with it the light of one lamp. It had been as powerless to stem the tide as the light of a child's lantern abandoned on the sands could have withstood the attack of a great wave. "Get back," Chase said impatiently to the old man who stood challenging the night with the glow of a penny dip. "I'll find out what has happened." He stared across the road, hoping to distinguish Crane's body in the shadows, but turned again at Señorita Monti's voice: "How much longer are you going to wait? If you are Caveda's friend——" He interrupted her with

anger, again half believing the truth of the part he played. "You call yourself that, and yet you won't tell me where he is. You won't even admit that he was here to-night." He stopped and gave her the opportunity to speak, to betray, above all to admit. But she admitted nothing, watching him in silence, proffering him back with what he took for contempt the sword of speech. Without turning he became aware of Crane's presence in the slow, familiar footsteps that crossed the road. They stopped behind him, and he knew that she had seen his friend. He said, with anger, in English, "Why have you shown yourself?" and was taken aback by the response, which came not from Crane but in Spanish from Señorita Monti. She said almost humbly and with an effect of pain, "Yes, Caveda has been here to-night."

PART II

CRANE caught her gaze before she spoke. It was the second time that he had seen her, but the first occasion on which he had been near enough to distinguish her expression. It was sufficiently beautiful, sufficiently close to what he had imagined it to be, for him to catch his breath with distaste. He thought how ugly it was to force her into an unwitting betrayal of her lover, and in his expression he tried to warn her that they were not to be trusted, before her eyes to spread out their whole forged pack of cards. He could do no better, his tongue tethered to a few conventional terms and all the useless and unmeaning resources of English. Speech makes for confusion, for hidden meanings, for misunderstandings, but without it they would still exist. It was evident that his expression could be misunderstood as easily as words. He had meant frankly to warn her against Chase and himself; instead she recognised the frankness and not the intention and prepared to trust them both the more blindly. "Yes," she admitted to him over Chase's shoulder, "Señor Caveda has been here to-night."

Crane did not understand Spanish, but the sound of Caveda's name and the particle of agreement which preceded it told him enough. He said in English to Chase: "Surely you've learnt all you want by this time. Shan't we go?" Chase turned on him

a puzzled, uncomprehending face. "Don't you see," he said, "that we are on the edge of things, that she has admitted . . ." "That she's loyal, that he was right to trust her?" "I wasn't going to say that," Chase said impatiently. "You don't mean," Crane went on, "that she's betrayed him?" "She's betrayed nothing."

Crane felt at the sight of his friend's incomprehension a mixture of impatience and affection. There was something, he thought, so reliable in Chase and so stubborn. He was braver than himself, he could be trusted for help and protection in any crisis, but he could never understand the possible virtue of a surrender. He could not show mercy to something he hated, however unreasonable the hatred. Because he saw that Chase intended to harry with more questions the courageous frightened woman, he again intervened. "You need ask her nothing. I've seen Caveda and followed him."

"Where?" Chase asked quickly. "Towards the market place." Chase turned without a word for Señorita Monti and started down the street under the plain assumption that Crane would follow, but Crane hesitated. It is strange of him, he thought, to go like that, rudely and with contempt. When all has been said, she loves a man whom he admires. It is I to whom that means a "something rotten" in the mind, not he. But he goes, and with a sudden decision, I stay. He came nearer to the woman where she waited at the top of the low steps with her eyes on the level of his own. "Do you understand English?" he said slowly, in a kind of copy-book

Spanish. He had forgotten that if her answer was Yes, she must have realised her betrayal, and he waited with hope. She said questioninglly in Spanish "Muy poco," and added in English, "very little," her odd accent sounding in his ears like a strange unmelodious music. That she had taken the trouble to translate even those two words encouraged him. It signified on her part a desire to communicate. Down the long passage behind her, which represented to him in its coldness and inhospitality all her past, the blue flame of a candle receded. Her parents had left her, abandoned her to the influences of a dark, empty street, which if it symbolised the future bore a marked resemblance to what had gone. Except in one respect, he thought, searching her face for the mark of rottenness, I am here. He could not find it. Perhaps it is not there at all, he thought, and I am wrong. Caveda may have deceived her, but he could not reconcile an injured innocence with the not unsympathetic shrewdness with which she waited for him to speak. He was almost more ready to believe in Caveda's virtue than in her simplicity.

"Your friend is waiting," she said at last in the same odd music, and it was true enough that Chase had halted at the end of the street, but the word was erroneous if it conveyed any idea of patience. One could not imagine the thick-set figure quivering with the cold, but it indicated chill and importunacy in more discernible fashion with pounding feet and peering, inquisitive face. "Let him wait," Crane said, and felt at the words the extent of his affection for a friend who, he felt sure, would always delay for him,

however impatiently. The girl had understood, for she laughed in a soaring care-free fashion that did not conform at all to a fleeing man, the dark street, the shot, and the headlong charge. Is it because she thinks her friend so safe with us? he thought. The idea struck straight at his conscience, but he had already decided what he must do and only hung back a little like a swimmer on a cold water's brink.

When he took the plunge, it was again with a slight shiver of distaste. He had made a decision, crossed a personal Rubicon, he who hated all decisiveness of that kind and whose ambition it was to live in a quiet that would allow no time for action, however brief, but all of life for contemplation, however confined. A grey goose winging across my grave, he thought, with an insincere smile that showed him how far he had travelled, for he was not accustomed to any form of insincerity, even with himself. "Perhaps you can understand this," he said slowly, choosing with care simple and short words. He got no answer from her attitude, which remained aloof, a little questioning, and possessed still the remnants of that aerial amusement. "You should not trust us." He emphasised the phrase with a repetition. "You must not trust us." He said, glancing at Chase impatiently pacing in the shadows, "My friend . . ." He hesitated at the melancholy thought that he had never betrayed him before; argued with him, yes, protested at many things, opposed him in words innumerable times, but at the worst never done more than finally stand aside with clean, washed hands. Pilate, he thought, was not to be condemned

for that symbolic cleansing, but only for the action of surrender, the scourging and the crown. And now I am going to betray my friend for the sake of a stranger, and he searched the woman's face in a hope of seeing at last imprinted there the mark of rottenness which would send him silent from her side, back to Chase waiting in the dark. But he found nothing but incomprehension and a certain beauty.

Suddenly it became necessary to make the betrayal absolute. It was not enough to betray in thought and word and yet leave no effect. She must understand at all costs. "Mio amigo," he said, pointing into the shadows, but the words would not come. "He is not Caveda's friend." The Rubicon was crossed, and what a dark icy stream, he thought, it has proved, and into what a winter-locked inhospitable land it has led me. There was no welcome from the one person who stood upon the farther shore to compensate him for the man he had left behind in that friendly and familiar land. She had understood one word, that was evident, Caveda. His expression and tone of voice had told her more—that here was something painful, anxious, urgent. She leant towards him a face of excitement and despair. It recalled something to him, but something for which he had to grope, among immediate memories, something shot with light and confused with many alien and unimportant faces. Then he saw her, as the rocket soared above the market place and the priest threaded his way through the crowd and a child shouted. She had turned the same expression on her companion, who continued in that brief illumination,

his back turned to the table at which Crane and Chase were sitting, to shoot the corks off empty bottles.

"You have been in the square," he exclaimed, pointing up the street. It was as though the recognition was important, one which if established would give him a claim to intimacy. You think this is the first time I have seen you, but no, I have seen you twice, three times. "El fiesta," he persisted, waving his hand in a vague, marketwards direction. She seemed to understand him and to admit, without the trouble of argument, his claim. It was of no consequence to her; what was imperative was to understand his previous statement. "Caveda," she prompted him with anxiety. "We are enemies, enemies," he emphasised, feeling that by including himself he was making some kind of atonement to Chase. He thought that she did not understand him, her whole attitude was still one of anxious attention. He searched his mind for a Spanish word, but no memory of his phrase book could help him. It was not the kind of word to be included there, where was to be found nothing but the hospitable, the friendly, amicable greetings, deprecations, apologies. It offered no help in such an obscure situation as that in which he found himself. He repeated despairingly, "We are enemies, Caveda's enemies," and saw out of a corner of an eye that Chase was coming back. "Enemies, enemies." It occurred to him that he could do no more. He had, as it were, confessed his sin, and though the priest failed to understand him, he was none the less absolved. And yet it pained him a little

to ease his conscience with a trick. "Enemies." He resented the uneasiness she was causing, the numerous questions of which the most shameful was: If she were not physically beautiful, should I have hesitated to deceive her? He made a gesture with his hand, angrily and resentfully, as though she were the image of something which he rejected. Perhaps it was the gesture, rather than the repetition of that colourless and inadequate word: there was no doubt that she understood him. Even as he turned away to meet Chase, she spoke, flinging at him a question that he could not understand and taking one step down towards the road. That calmness had deserted her was evident in her hope of communicating with him in Spanish. She made no attempt to translate her phrase. There was not time for that, she seemed to think, there was time only for a miracle, the miracle of tongues. After all, she had understood him. But she had made the attempt, and that he would not do, for Chase was now beside him.

"What's the matter?" Chase asked. "Why don't you come?" and it occurred to Crane that what had happened was the loss of the deafness and dumbness which he had paraded before Chase as desirable qualities. He was no longer a man who could only use his eyes. He had spoken to Señorita Monti and she had understood him. "I'm coming," he said, and as he looked back to where she stood like a reed growing out of a dark stream and quivering from the wind's touch, he knew that he had gained one capability to lose another. His sight was dulled. He could not see her as clearly as before, his mind now

occupied with the desire to understand what his ears had heard. "What did she say?" he asked, not looking back again. "I don't know. I didn't hear." For an instant he thought that Chase was about to ask him the reason for his delay, and he was unwilling to acknowledge so quickly what he had done. He could not give his reason in the cold of the street, in the dark try to express the lights and shades of a tortuous conscience. But he admitted to himself the next moment that he need not have feared. Chase had come out with a purpose and he would ask no questions but those that furthered it. With affection he thought how unlike Chase it had been, half an hour before, to offer to return home.

"Which way now?" Chase asked, when they reached the end of the street. "To the left," Crane said, and for a little they walked in silence. Their way was checkered with light and dark, passing from lamplight to night and into lamplight again. Only the tall houses on each side, except where the light caught a pane of glass on the lowest floor or the polished iron-work of a balcony, remained always unlit, inscrutable and in appearance abandoned. If the sudden rush of horsemen had passed this way, they seemed to have swept with them all life, or at least its outward signs—voices singing, the barking of dogs, corner whisperings of man and woman, shaded lamps for old people reading late. Once a cat padded across the road with muffled purpose, but whatever her clandestine errand, it was a silent one. "What was he like?" Chase asked, speaking aggressively loud, as if the silence angered him.

"I couldn't see clearly," Crane said. It was no use trying to convey to Chase the emotions with which he had waited for some signal from the house. Crouching in the shadows, praying that he should be invisible to any other watcher, he had prayed too at times that nothing would occur to drive him to a decision or to an action. He had waited with ears intent for any hateful sound. It was easy to have a kind of courage with Chase at his side, supported by the fear of showing fear, but he dreaded intensely that he might be forced to act alone in the dark deserted street. He could never have entered the house as Chase had done, by himself and ignorant. But the very acuteness of his fear made him sure that sooner or later, in this next second or next minute or in some other space of time no less certain for its vagueness, he would have to face it.

Never in my life, he thought, have I felt afraid of something which has not occurred. People comforted one by saying that events never proved in realisation all that one had feared. That might be true for others. It was not true for him. His life was taped out with terrors, and each new terror he could foresee. They were like a succession of peaks. As soon as he had climbed one, he grew aware of the next, but he could not, as a climber could, turn back. His life lay there. Behind him was childhood and the womb and the first terror of birth. Somewhere in front was what he hoped and believed to be the last terror of death. Every peak must be passed before he reached it and peace. There was no short cut and no halt was possible or even desirable, for what comfort would it

be to stay in the eternal companionship of the same present fear? It would be to renounce even the meagre and brief comforts to be found in the valleys.

He knew, therefore, that he would not be allowed to remain undisturbed in his hiding until Chase returned, but he had expected some warning before the door opened and a figure appeared. Yet his first emotion had been an incredulous relief. Had he, for once, eluded his fate? And if for once, why should he not be freed from it for ever, the last terror behind him and he in a state better than that of death? "It was very curious," he said slowly to Crane with regret for a brief illusion, "I thought at first, when he came out on to the steps, that he was you. I couldn't see his face, of course, and like you he was in riding breeches. But it was not that. Something about his figure, I suppose. He had decision. He even hesitated with decision. But then of course I saw that his clothes were much more neat than yours." He smiled reluctantly. "One might have called them natty."

"Natty," Chase repeated, holding the word up to contempt. It was obvious that he thought its use only a surprising vulgarism in reference to a man in whom their interest was literally vital, an affair of life and its attendant shadow. But Crane was well aware why he had employed it, and why too it had come to mind when he had realised with despair that the man on the steps was not Chase. He had clutched at anything which could demean his opponent and minimise his own danger. Slowly, deliberately, his head turning this way and a little that, the big-boned figure

with the hidden face trod downward to the street. The lamp above the door glinted for a moment upon the polished leather of the gaiters and of the remarkably small shoes. To balance upon them seemed to require a conscious effort, and he swayed a little like a toy tumbling figure; but that last illusion was probably caused by the intensity of his interest, which seemed unjustified by the silence and abandonment. During these slow movements Crane had time to wonder whether he had not been seen and whether this cautious ritual dance was not a parallel to the swaying of a snake that hypnotises before it strikes. But all the time the face was hidden, the ritual incomplete, unless its climax was to be the very revelation of the features. Then the dance was over, the man stood upon the cobbles motionless, listening, and the act of surrendering himself with a kind of visible devotion to a single sense, emphasised the stillness through all the town except where Crane stood. There sounds seemed to accumulate with demonic purpose, until round his stiff and apprehensive body an orchestra of small noises crashed to the *finale*—a leaf from a plane tree tinkled like a triangle upon the stones, his own subdued breathing was released in a thread of sound like the note of a violin, and like the first premonitory rumble of the double bass his heart began a deeper beat. Then, in spite of all, his audience turned and made his way down the street, deliberately, without haste and without fear.

"I followed him to the market place," Crane said. "He never once looked round. He went into an inn

down a side street and I came back. It was no use hanging about outside. I should have been seen, and I had no way of letting you know."

"Perhaps our work has been done," Chase said. "The soldiers——" He stopped suddenly and laid his hand on Crane's arm. He had something of the same decision and the same intensity as Caveda listening. Before them, surrounded by starless darkness, was a great curve of light. It was like the reflection of a bowl of fire, lifted towards the sky by a pagan priest whose voice they could now hear addressing an invisible congregation. To Crane the words were unintelligible interjections, denunciations, syllables of command. "Hurry," Chase said softly and began to walk forward quickly on his toes. They turned a corner and passed a man flattened against the wall, his cheek pressed to the stone. There were no cobbles here and the mud of the street had been churned and splashed around him by the passage of many horses. He paid them no attention, staring towards the light of the market place. "Keep close to the wall," Chase said, "in case there's firing." "What's happened?" Crane whispered, and got for his reply no more than an embittered retort, "How can I know? Get to the wall, I tell you." From the market place a number of voices began to shout together a phrase of which the meaning was lost long before it reached them. A woman screamed and a horse whinnied. Then again there was silence until the voice began to speak again. "What's the use of going on? Why not wait here?" Crane said. The unintelligibility of the situation frightened him more than a shot, more than had

the stream of horsemen surging past his hiding place. "There will be a story," Chase said. "There's no need for you to come. Go back to the house." He spoke abruptly, but the next moment turned and converted his irritable command into a request. "Go back. Why not? It will be of use to me." Crane shook his head. "No," he said. "There will be no use in going back." "She may understand English," Chase protested. "Oh, I made her understand me," Crane said; "that's the reason," and because he did not wish to make his confession in that situation, pressed against a wall, in danger of a shot, he added quickly, "Let's go on." For after all, he thought, to return would not be to go back. I am not Joshua, to make time stand still. I cannot creep back to her as into the womb. Death may come equally well there as here, or even on the road, when I am alone. The presence of Chase seemed to him the best comfort he could gain.

They were not able to go far. A cordon of mounted men was drawn across the end of the street, and their only view was of an empty strip of square, seen between soldiers' heads and an overturned market stall. Chase spoke to a trooper in front of him. The man turned a nervous, angry face and pushed him back with the flat of his hand. "Follow me," Chase whispered, and stepping sideways he disappeared into a doorway. Crane entered after him, and the dark swept round them and with it an intenser cold.

"Have you a match?" Chase's voice came from a disquieting distance. They had entered the doorway together, but that decision which Crane admired had already carried his friend several yards further into

the darkness. "What are you going to do?" Crane asked and finding his match-box felt forward with extended hand. "There'll be a window over the square," Chase said. A match spurted, flickered for a moment, projecting towards them a steep wooden staircase and damp walls, went out. "This way," Chase said. His voice came clearer as he apparently turned his head: "You can stay if you like till I come down again. I don't see why you should take any risks. This is my job." "No. I'll come," Crane said. It would have been unbearable to remain alone to face his fear. He tried to encourage himself: "The house is empty."

But it was not empty. It had only been stricken dumb. At the top of the stairs a light showed as a silken thread along the floor. Chase pushed a door open and immediately a man's voice screamed at him. The light came from the square and from the stub of a candle lit before an image of the Virgin. A religious picture hung upon the wall behind shattered glass. Against one side of the room crouched a woman, a small girl and an unshaven man, so thin that it was amazing that even stubble could grow in so parched and bleak a soil. Chase spoke to the man in Spanish and got for answer only a flutter of resentful, humbled hands and a kind of canine whine. "They've had a stray bullet in here," Chase said, nodding at the broken glass. "You had better keep close to the wall. I must look out."

Crane from the doorway stared at the wall and the crouching trinity. It was not the bareness of the room that impressed him most with their poverty

and roused his pity, nor yet their thinness, torn clothes and animal smell. It was the fact that even the room in which they lived was not theirs. They were squatters and resented intrusion only with suspicion and humility. Already they were resigned to the presence of strangers, and would have made no further protest if the two of them had lain down there for the night. The woman said something to him and when he did not answer stared again at the opposite wall with no appearance of curiosity. His silence did not show that he was a foreigner. She seemed accustomed to no reply.

"I don't believe that there's any danger now," Chase said. "The soldiers have cleared the square. They've put a cordon at the end of every street. Come to the side of the window and see if you can see the inn where Caveda went." Reluctantly Crane crossed the room. The cause was less fear now—if Chase said that there was no danger, he believed implicitly that at least there was none his friend could foresee—than an unwillingness to ignore so completely the real owners of the room. If he had known Spanish he would have made some kind of apology before turning his back on them and using for his own trivial curiosity what seemed in effect their solitary link with the winds, the night, the sky. "Yes," he said, pointing across the square, "there's the street. You can't see the inn from here. I don't believe that all this has anything to do with Caveda." "All this" that he tried to include in a few spread fingers was the deep-lit bowl of the square, along the rim of which, seen from their high eyrie, was drawn

a single line of mounted men curiously foreshortened. The lamps behind them at the edge of the square or dangling from deserted houses threw their shadows forward like a dark Etruscan pattern. In the centre stood a little group of dismounted men.

No attention, it was certain, was directed towards the side street and Caveda's inn. They were all staring at an empty balcony. One man, a little apart from the group, shouted. When the balcony remained empty, he turned with a command to the men behind him and nearly a dozen rifles went up to a ragged and uncertain "ready." His face lifted again to the balcony and he called out two words. They were simple words that Crane could recognise: "Two minutes."

"What has been happening?" He defended himself with irritation against the probable retort: "I know that you don't know. But what do you think?"

Chase said with unexpected softness: "I imagine some of Caveda's men have been firing on the police. They are trying to avoid a fight. I don't believe they know who's there, how many of them there are." "Do you think Caveda——" "Caveda," Chase said, "I imagine he's well out of the town by now. Half way to the hills," he added, his eyes for the first time leaving the group in the square below and ranging from house-front to house-front with an air of discomfort, restlessness and even grief. Crane touched his arm. It was not often that he felt so uncertain of Chase's thoughts. "Yes," he said, "if only he had not escaped, you'd be halfway home now—in your

thoughts." "These people," Chase exclaimed, with an unusual volubility, "I don't know what they are doing, what they stand for. Caveda is the only man I feel I could ever understand." He said for the second time that day, "I'm glad you are here."

The words struck straight at Crane's conscience. "You needn't be glad," he said. "You don't know," he hesitated in a kind of anger that any man should depend on him for anything but the pure fact of friendship. Because I am your friend, he thought, why should you expect anything of me? Because I deceive you, why should you think that I am less your friend? But he knew at the same time that he required of Chase exactly what Chase required of him. "Listen, I'll tell you now," he said, feeling too tired to waste time in justification, but the words aroused no response, no interest; he doubted whether they had been heard. "Look," Chase said, his eyes no longer following Caveda out of the close and shabby town towards the hills but focussed with excitement and suspense on nothing more important than a handkerchief. Tied to the handle of a broom and thrust through a window, it undulated over the square with an ironic arrogance; gleaming against the darkness of the sky and touched to primrose by the light of gas, it might have been the banner and blazon of surrender, the visual statement of a strange and paradoxical pride, the flag of one genuine follower of Christ who believed that a war was not to the strong. Crane was glad that in its minute folds his own words had been lost.

"He's coming out," Chase exclaimed. The soldiers

below kept their rifles at the "ready," while a pair of tall, bullet-smashed windows were opened and a man stepped out. He held his arms above his head and his sleeves were turned back from his wrists to prove how unarmed, how harmless he was. He was very small and shabby, and the light from the window behind gleamed on a bald head fringed with dark curls. "That's not Caveda," Crane said.

The officer gave a command and two of his men lowered their rifles and crossed the square. The others remained covering the diminutive hostage on the balcony. It seemed to Crane unnecessary. He was so obviously unarmed and exhausted, leaning forward over the balcony with sagging arms, following the progress of the two soldiers. But he proved to be possessed of a more subtle armament than pistol or bomb. Still leaning over the balcony with his arms above his head he began to shout, flinging small quick sentences at the men below. "What is he saying?" Crane asked. "I'm trying to hear," Chase said impatiently. The officer gave a command and the rifles went up. The man's voice rose into a scream. He ceased to be immobile, weary, almost indifferent. Backwards and forwards along the balcony he ran, his hands above his head, as though he hoped that while they were thus raised in surrender, he would be protected by all humanity. To humanity he had begun to appeal and not to the faulty automatons below. He shouted, spoke, screamed at row after row of empty windows, at desolate house-fronts, at the dark square and the overturned stall. "Be quiet," Chase said, as Crane shifted in nervousness and sus-

pense, "I can't hear what he's saying."

The officer gave a command, and six rifles went off, one after the other, with an effect of triviality and uselessness in the wide empty night. They seemed as unimportant as popping corks. They did not even stop the voice speaking. "That's a Spaniard all over," Chase said with bitterness, "shooting at an unarmed man." He added with illogical resentment: "They can't even aim straight." It was clear that every shot had missed. The man continued to bound backwards and forwards, his shadow, flung down on to the square, playing a mocking game of grab at the feet of his enemies. The only effect of the shots had been to increase the fervour of his screams. He would be heard, he was determined that what he had to say should be conveyed to at least one listener. The watching soldiers seemed to mean nothing to him in comparison with the rows of empty windows, although to Crane it was clear that a few at least of the soldiers had heard. Here and there a man drooped forward in the saddle with an intent, uneasy air, allowing his horse to carry him a little out of alignment. Then the men in the centre fired again, and for the first time the raised arms were lowered. They clung to the balcony, while the knees bent and the head swayed and circled, the eyes looking up and down, here and there, in the hope, perhaps, of seeing somewhere the humanity to which he had seemed to appeal. For the first time he saw Chase and Crane across the square a little above his head. He could not have distinguished their features in the real dark and in the illusory mist of pain; they

were probably no more to him than frightened peasants. But they were worthy of his dying notice. He had, it appeared, something to say to them, and he screamed a part of it across the square, before two soldiers emptied their rifles into his body from the window behind. "The swine," Chase said, his voice raised in an instant revolt.

The man's death did not so affect Crane. Knives and pistols were not the only weapons of mankind, and the loose arms which now dangled earthwards through the ironwork of the balcony were evidence of the power of words. The man's speech had been dangerous enough to cause his death. His weapon belonged exclusively to spiritual beings. One does not shoot a dog, he thought, because it barks. "What was it he was trying to say?" he asked.

Chase replied slowly, as though between each phrase he tried to identify his own emotion, pleasure, fear, surprise, "It appears that Caveda's men have blown up the bridge over the river to the south. They surprised the guard. No one can have escaped." "Was that all he wanted us to know?" Crane asked in disappointment. The man had appeared as a messenger with dangerous news for all humanity, and now his message flung out with such desperation to empty windows, empty houses, empty square proved no more than news of a small military success. The sound of the shots had made the peasants cower closer to the wall. They must have heard the voice shouting, shouting if they had only known it to them, but they were interested in it not at all, no more than they were curious of the two men, whom they had

not sufficient pride of ownership to consider intruders. The man and the woman began to squabble in low, monotonous tones, while the child drew meaningless, unless they were obscene, circles in the dust on the floor. If they were the representatives of humanity, the little figure with the bald head shouting up and down the balcony had indeed been self-deceived to expect from them any judgment, whether of approval or condemnation, anything but an abysmal indifference. He repeated: "Was that all?"

"All?" Chase repeated, as if astonished at some loss of percipience on the part of his friend. "What more do you want? It means that until they can mend that bridge, and to do that they must clear the hills round of snipers, San Juan is cut off from the south. No more reinforcements. To the north they've got the mountains and Caveda and unfriendly peasants. If the town joined Caveda the garrison would be almost helpless. Of course there's Riego. They'll send for him, I imagine."

"But is there any danger of the town rising?" Crane asked. It was difficult to think of San Juan as an entity and not as a collection of individuals, the peasants and their child, the two fat business men, Señorita Monti, the inn-keeper. He could not imagine those people joined in the act of "rising," or even what a rising meant, except a noisy despairing dance along a balcony. "Oh, yes," Chase said, "it wouldn't surprise me. San Juan is a poor place, and Caveda isn't unpopular with the poor as the soldiers are." So it appeared that there did exist a corporate San Juan, some tide of life that rose and ebbed

and flowed along invisible arteries, that was sensible to privation and emotion. And if there was something rotten in one woman, it was also a rottenness in that unseen and still sleeping body. For a moment a vision came to him of what San Juan was, a vision in the form of a memory. He saw the square filled by a slow surge of persons who in the darkness lost individuality and became no more than a crowd, moving a little this way and a little that, accompanied by a soft muttering. That was the body of San Juan stirring in its sleep, whispering through its dreams. He had said then to Chase, "How terrible it would be to have a crowd like that against one, seeking one." The memory brought back the fear. He stepped back from the window in case the square should already begin to fill; it frightened him to see Chase remain, flinging his shadow on to the stones below, stamping them, as it were, with his imprint, his personality. "Francis," he said.

Chase turned from the window and came back into the room. "I'm wondering," he said. "They've blown up the bridge, but what's the good of that unless they've managed to destroy the telegraph? And if that's gone, I can let my paper know nothing."

"It doesn't matter about the paper," Crane said with sudden anger and got for reply an astonished glance: "Nothing else matters as much." But for once, it seemed, Chase was not ready to leave a puzzle unprobed. It meant again the acceptance of so wide a difference between them that friendship was powerless to bridge it. Chase's words were the ex-

pression of a complete misunderstanding: "I don't mean that I'm not thinking of you. But there's no danger. No one but Riego knows why I'm here."

"And one other," Crane said, surrendering him to his mistake the better to seize the moment. "Yes, of course," Chase smiled. "You know the secret." He added in a tone that had sorrow in it as well as envy, as if again he faced the impassable gulf, across which he feared one day to lose the sight of his friend: "Even if I wanted to, how could I keep it from you?"

"No, I mean Señorita Monti," Crane said. "I told her that you were Caveda's enemy."

Chase met his words with the lowered chin of an unskilled boxer. He said, to the ground rather than to Crane: "You couldn't have told her. You know no Spanish." "Oh, she understood," Crane said, with a cruelty which he immediately regretted, for what was the statement but a whole Court arraigned to judge his friend, what was it but accusation, judgment, condemnation? Señorita Monti was a stranger and she had understood him, though he spoke a foreign tongue; Chase had been his friend for ten years, spoke the same language, and yet he comprehended not a single shade of the conscience that had ranged itself against him. But Crane was forced to admit that he had not been fair to his friend; he had not exaggerated his lack of understanding, but he had not allowed for the strength of his goodwill. He had expected almost any outbreak, short of physical violence, but not this silence. They had quarrelled often enough over trivial things; now it seemed that

the very importance of the occasion checked angry words. There was something here, Chase must have felt, which called for nothing less than understanding or the end, a signal from the darkness or the gulf for ever with no living being visible beyond. He would not join the squabbling peasants and add to the monotonous dribble of resentment and triviality. But the lowered head seemed overawed by the immensity of the question: How to understand?

Crane said at last, less now with the idea of excusing himself than of helping his friend out of that morass of painful silence, "We are Caveda's enemies, not the girl's." He had brought Chase no nearer to understanding, but he had succeeded in his other object. With his eyes still on the ground, Chase said, in a low, expressionless voice, "You must have seen a lot in that photograph I couldn't see."

"A lot? I don't know what you mean."

"I mean this," Chase said, looking up with a face pale but resolutely controlled to avoid any parallel with the nagging peasants along the wall. "I mean you must have seen enough beauty to put you into a heat, and enough of her character to know," he hesitated and then let out with a touch of defiance, "which of us you prefer."

"There's no question of preference," Crane said, "of liking or not liking," but he was aware as he spoke of a grain of insincerity irritating the mind. If you did not think her beautiful, he asked himself, if she were one of those peasants, if she were the man and Caveda the woman, would your action have been the same? He recoiled at the touch of his own inqui-

sition and wondered if Chase too had suffered the same pain at his hands, a pain like the touch of a needle of ice on a nerve exposed. He made a half avowal, a half confession which cost him more effort than had the whole tale of betrayal. "I admit she's beautiful." It was not enough. The surprise and pain which had for the moment silenced Chase's resentment made Crane a debtor. They were a payment of friendship, which had in some way to be returned, coin for coin. An eye for an eye was not the only kind of debt a man had to pay. He must pay for the pain of a friend as well as for the injury of an enemy. And as he paid, doling out the words with an unintentional parsimony, Crane recognised the fate of a tortuous conscience, that it must always pay a debt in currency unrecognised by the creditor.

He said regretfully: "I might not have told her, if she had been less beautiful. Does that matter? I should have been wrong then, and I am right. Yes, right, whatever you say, now. Give her the credit for making me do what's right. I admit the credit's not mine."

"Credit," Chase repeated with astonishment at the use of such a word and at a mind which could so justify its action. "You've endangered both of us. Did you imagine that you would be safe because you told her, that she would remember you if Caveda returned? You can't depend on a woman like that."

"For those two minutes," Crane said, "I didn't think of myself." It was true. Fear had been behind him, the fear of the long wait in the dark and the

figure on the steps, and as always there was terror in front of him, peak beyond peak, range beyond range, merging at last in the eternal night. But for those two minutes he had been isolated on an oasis, wonderfully safe, of altruism. "Nor of me," Chase commented, in a tone which contained despair but no resentment. "Yes, I thought of you," Crane said, and that also was true. He had thought of him as something precious, of which he must risk the loss. And am I to lose you? he wondered without excitement, with more than anything else a sense of fate dragging him along a course which held the customary terrors it was no use striving to avoid. I pass others, similar and as many, if I pick my path, he thought; now that I am so blindly propelled I may reach the end sooner. He hoped, watching Francis Chase turn his back and move to the window, that in future he would not have to live in any greater loneliness.

Chase said, speaking slowly, as though each word, unimportant in itself, was a stone dropped into the chasm between them and might serve as the foundation of a bridge, "Everything will soon be quiet. They've left the body on the balcony. I suppose they think it will act as a warning. I wonder if they are wise. They are moving off now. You can hear the horses' hooves. But the square's still empty. No one has come back." If the peasants in the room were the type of the peasants of the town, it would be long, Crane thought, before anyone came to retrieve or revile or even look with the merest curiosity at the body. They showed not the slightest interest, now

that the shouting and the shots had ceased. They had been terrified when a bullet smashed the glass on their wall, but when fear left them it was only to free their minds to bicker over some minute affair of pesetas, always with the same monosyllable of affirmation or denial.

"It will be quite safe to leave now," Chase said. "I must go to the post office and find if I can get a wire through to London." He spoke with such an assumption of calm that it seemed impossible to Crane that a moment before they had confronted each other with the possibility of a final rupture. Have I credited him with too much sensitiveness? he wondered. He said a little rashly: "I must go back. We promised that we would let them know"—but he had no time to finish. Chase swung round from the window, showing a face oddly at variance with the calmness of the words he had spoken. Pain made it momentarily old. He said in a high voice which for the first time aroused the attention of the peasants: "Go back then. Can't you keep off a woman for an hour? Here, take her picture," and with a hurried, blind stride that narrowly missed a post of the door he started for the stairs and the street.

Crane picked up the photograph and followed him, past the crouching peasants, the peeling walls, the shattered picture and the candle-lit Virgin, to the head of the stairs. There he paused, watching Chase, who had stopped at the point where the stairs turned and fell steeply out of sight. The face was like a patch of floating mist in the darkness, and when

Chase spoke, Crane could not tell in what direction the words were addressed. That they were meant for him he assumed, because they were spoken in English. "You needn't go far," and with a kind of obscure insult: "You seem to have made good use of your time." Crane followed him down. When he was able to see round the turning of the stairs, he knew what Chase meant. Both men stood and stared at the figure of Señorita Monti, who leant in the light of a street lamp against a post of the door. She was bare-headed and breathing fast and quite unconscious of being watched. It was events in the outer air that mattered to her. Her back was half turned to the darkness and she seemed to have no fear of any night noises from the unseen, any creakings of old wood.

"Señorita Monti," Chase called. She turned then and gazed up the stair. She could not have been certain who it was that spoke nor have been able to make out more than a thickening of the darkness and the glimmer of two faces. She was at a complete disadvantage, picked out of the darkness by the light from which she could not hide a single tremor, the least change of expression. But if she felt any fear she had the will to disguise it. One would have thought that it was she who had the mastery, guarding the door to the light and the open, shutting them like disobedient children into this close, cupboard darkness. She remained silent, forcing their hand. Chase questioned her. His tone showed it, and Crane did not need his interpretation ("She says all the town knows that we are here") to understand her reply.

Her expression of amused scorn and the wide-flung gesture of her hands told him the gist of it. It conveyed to him all the promiscuity of a small town, the whispers and the prying and the scandal. Even the blank windows that had reflected so bleakly the last gestures of the dying orator had absorbed more than he had imagined. There were no secrets in a place like San Juan. It made it the more unnecessary for them to fulfil their promise, but something, Crane thought, had made the woman seek them out, and it was as well to fulfil the letter of their pact. "Tell her," he said to Chase, "that, as far as we know, Caveda's safe."

For a moment he thought that Chase would refuse. He was aware in the darkness of the hostile stiffening of his body. If it had been bad news, Crane knew how gladly and with what an assumption of carelessness Chase would have tossed the words down to her. But if he had dreaded to see any lightening of her face when he spoke or hear an expression of thanks, he was relieved. The light exposed her face, and both men leant a little forward to study closely the effect. Certainly the words seemed to give her no joy or else she was perfectly studied in deceit. "Did you really tell her that?" Crane whispered with incredulity and did not wait for Chase's affirmative to regard again the woman below who had uttered no word of thanks, relief or even of the merest interest. "Ask her," he said, "whether she knows the man they've shot?" This time she seemed to recognise some word in the English sentence which was all the clue she needed to his meaning.

Peering up the stairs with an obvious effort to detach him from his companion she replied with an odd meekness: *Sí, señor,*” and then in the broken music of a language alien to her: “He is my barber.”

Crane came down the stairs until the light shone in his eyes, and he was able to feel no longer that the advantage of position belonged to her. He tried her again in English, speaking very slowly. “Can I take you home?” She watched him with intensity and, he could not doubt it, friendliness. She wished to understand him and was willing to make an effort. Chase called down the stairs in a tone of triumph: “She doesn’t know what you mean,” and then with a magnanimity intended to give pain, “Shall I translate it for you?” “No,” Crane said, “no.” He searched his mind for a single Spanish word which would give her, he was certain, all the clue she needed. “*A su casa,*” he said, and waited in perfect confidence that she would understand him. He was not disappointed in her power of perception, though he was in her answer, which took the form of a shake of the head and a gesture of the hands that seemed to express a willingness to comply if there had not been so many hundred reasons for refusal. “But why did you follow us?” he implored her, and his tone and expression again seemed to provide her with the only clue she found necessary. But she answered him in Spanish, and put a period to this momentary intimacy, islanded together in light at the bottom of the stairs. They were separated from each other as by a sheet of glass; they could see and they could hear and they had the will to touch, at times bringing

their faces so close to the transparent barrier that their own breath blew between and misted it.

Chase's voice came down to him and hauled him back, offering him the means to shatter that fragile enemy, but only at the cost of relinquishing solitude. "I'll translate for you," he said. "She's telling you that she couldn't wait for news—of Caveda of course she means." Of course she meant it. He did not need Chase to tell him that, but that plain, straightforward meaning was qualified with mystery, the mystery of her lack of joy. He was not accustomed to any mystery in human relationships. He had seldom found either men or women to excel in anything but conscious subtlety. Then one had only to perceive the motive and follow the other mind along a clear, however elaborately twisted, road. Here he could not grasp the golden thread. He heard Chase speaking, pursuing him with a certain venom which he did not trouble to understand. "Shall I translate for you? Why shouldn't you use me as your interpreter?" But she had already gone. She did not lack decision. Hesitation with her, Crane believed, was only the form of thought. The thought completed, hesitation was over. The inimical sentences and questions that flowed down the stairs had not troubled her. It pleased Crane to notice that she had made no effort to understand them. Her effort had been reserved for him, as if it was the best payment she could accord him for his frankness. "Won't you follow her home? She's only leading the way." There were limits, Crane found, to patience and even to irritation. While he followed her with his eyes, he

sharpened his retort. She had pulled her shawl tightly round her shoulders against the wind, which had no other effect against her. It made her neither hurry nor bend from its assault. She walked softly with straight, stiff back that gave her progress into the shadows and towards invisibility the effect of a dark decisiveness. "If I wished to let her know anything of importance," he said, with his eyes now fixed on an empty square, an overturned stall, some hoof-marks in the mud, and a succession of dim lights, "I shouldn't need your help. She'd understand."

It was on that belief he acted next day and found himself again facing her, with nothing between them but the fierce midday sun, streaming across a crude carpet and seeking the gums and moisture in all the woodwork of the room. Señora Monti, he had been told, had retreated to bed and would not be seen again until the cool of the afternoon or the cold of the evening. Somewhere, he imagined, her husband would be sitting in a darkened room chatting with a priest or communing silently and more satisfyingly with St. John of the Cross and Loyola. The belief had brought him there, but now that it had faded he faced only too certainly the barrier between. Why have I come? he wondered, what possible good can I do for either of us? Caveda had stood in the same place, he supposed, and examining the walls, the statue of the Virgin, the crucifix, the hard, ascetic furniture, he thought: Has he too wondered, what good? Perhaps Caveda sought what he chiefly sought, only

a kind of peace. It had been a grim night, spent in the silent and resentful company of his friend. The silence here was of a different quality. He did not wish to break it and the one grain of discord was the knowledge that it had to be broken. Ought I, he wondered, to use my few words of Spanish, or try to make her understand in English? The question was answered for him. "Why do you come?" she asked and, to show that the peremptoriness of the question was due only to her ignorance of the language, smiled.

The smile astonished him. Never had he advanced so blindly into relationship with a human being. Had she not understood that he was Caveda's enemy? Had she illimitable friendship or charity? The thought even occurred to him that any man was welcome to her. He said with a certain deceit, "I come from my friend. He is anxious that Caveda should not know . . ." He stopped, seeing in her face only the will to understand, not understanding. He began again, simplifying its meaning so that it became a personal appeal, in which Chase had no part: "You will not let Caveda know, you will not tell Caveda." Before he had time to feel triumph at her comprehension, he was amazed by a flame of anger. "Why should I tell?"

He could only murmur "I thought" and stop, for there seemed to be all the reasons in the world why she should tell. Even his dreams the night before had supplied them, when he had watched, through a crack in a foot-thick wall, Caveda, his body and features half borrowed from Chase and

half from ancient pictures of the Eternal Enemy, conversing with her and fingering her in the long grass. The sight had woken his own physical desire, so that he had beaten the wall with his fists and screamed to her in the name of a street-walker he had once known, but the wall absorbed all sound. Now even the memory of her dream defencelessness made him a little restless. "You know him. You know his friends. He has been here." He had forgotten for a moment in his uneasiness, which he would not dignify by the name of jealousy, the difficulty of language, but he had spoken slowly in simple words and she understood him, for with eyes that glanced from point to point of the small rather airless room, taking in as it were in her survey Virgin and crucifix, straight uncushioned chairs and the overblown roses of the floor, she said, as though the qualification were of importance, "Not in this room." It was not crudity, but a desire to draw out her meaning, to put the burden and responsibility of speech on her, that made him say, "No, but in this house," and as he spoke he wondered whether it was not a more intimate room that Caveda had shared with her. She was unwilling perhaps to commit her sin or show the signs of it before the emblems of religion on the wall.

The thought was still in his mind when her eyes came to rest at last on his face and she said, not with indignation but with what appeared to be despair, "You think he is my lover, that I love him." Crane said with a sudden warmth, not caring whether she followed his words or not, "Should I blame him?"

He must have told you that you are beautiful." He did not know how much she understood, but she laughed at him without mirth, with uneasiness. She examined him for a while in silence before explaining: "He is not my lover, not to-day, not to-morrow." She said to him questioningly, as though she were asking his opinion or the matter rested with him, "The day after, perhaps. Or the day after that."

So I have been wrong, he thought. There was not of necessity any rottenness, unless her unalarmed consideration of possibilities was a mark of it. His sense of relief made him act with an impulsiveness wholly alien to him; his self-knowledge and foresight left no room for the unexpected. "No," he implored, "no." That, at least, was a particle which could not be misunderstood. When she waited without speaking for an explanation, he realised that he had lost his advantage. The initiative was his. Sometimes his longing for peace and freedom from fear took the form simply of a desire for mutual disarmament, of a laying down of swords in silence. But now he realised there was no hope of that. They were still at the stage of trying each other's defences, of learning the other's skill. Only when they had measured each other and knew every form of parry, every method of assault, could the end come, only when they had fought so long without result that their muscles were paralysed and the swords fell from their hands.

"I mean this," he said, "Caveda's a murderer and a thief, no better. He wants to be bought out, bribed.

You can't have anything to do with him."

From his protest she picked a word here and there and repeated them. They might have been the only words she understood and on them, like an antiquarian on the syllables of a defective manuscript, she was forced to hang the meaning of the whole. "Murderer, thief, money," she said softly, and then with a vehemence of disgust, possibly with Caveda, possibly with herself: "He has charm. He is good-looking." "That's nothing," Crane said.

But she would not allow it. "It is a great deal," she said. Shutting her eyes on the room that Caveda had never entered, she added slowly: "It is almost everything." Her tone was one of despair. Behind her closed lids she was alone in darkness. Crane knew the tone and knew the gesture. He too had tried often enough to wipe out in that way the world, only to find that the darkness was not empty but as full of menace as the day. He thought, if only I could join her there. Somewhere after all in that darkness, in spite of menaces, might be found the final disarmament. For there the menaces were not human; at worst they were the veiled simulacrums of humanity. Speech would not place him in that darkness by her side, he knew, but how could even their thoughts touch, when their thoughts were phrased in different tongues? He was driven as a last and, as he was aware, useless resort, to words. "There's all the world left," he said. At least she understood the literal meaning of the five words. "It is not the world I care about," she protested, speaking softly and clearly out of her darkness with little hesitation and

only the broken music of her tone betraying how alien her speech. "He is the world," and she let her eyes open first on the Virgin and the small smoky flame before it, as if heaven and the spirit were the contrasts she intended.

The inference was plain, that she did not love Caveda, but he doubted her. Certainly the closed eyes and the weariness did not represent indifference. She might say that she cared nothing for the world, but the world besieged her. She was not like her father, that dim man whom he had seen retreating down the passage, candle in hand, back to his study and his saints. Her eyes and ears were open for impressions, her movements were quick and light, she watched him with attention. The candle before the Virgin was guttering in its wax. Her words had relieved him of an anxiety; how great that anxiety had been he only now realised. He expressed it negatively, preferring to express his past fear rather than his present relief. "I was afraid——" he said.

He noticed at once how quickly she seized his meaning. Three words, if she understood them, were enough. A sentence would have conveyed less to Chase. "You," she exclaimed in a surprise that must have been partly feigned. The previous night had brought them together in an intimacy of fear, danger and confession. They could not meet now as strangers. But she repeated her exclamation: "You," in a tone of amusement that was not in the least cruel but a deliberate turning of the back on dark thoughts and despair, bringing with the single word their

conversation of broken sentences, their awareness of the half-transparent barrier, down to an everyday level. She crossed the white stream of sun to a chair, and Crane found himself standing disconcerted before a young, pretty and amused woman. "Teach me English," she commanded him, her chin cupped on her hands and her eyes regarding him with a friendly malice. Here was no haven of a hunted man, no woman torn with anxiety over the fate of her lover. Crane was used to the quickness with which his moods changed, but she had shown a speed he could not rival. "You know enough," he said grudgingly, still with a shadow of sombreness. "No," she said, "no. Not enough if we are friends." She commanded him, "Your name." "Michael Crane," he said, and found himself smiling at her odd version of his Christian name. "I am Eulelia Monti," she said.

"I know. I was told that. A man at the hotel," and he tried to give her an impression of the fat man with his hands. "He was to marry me," she said, "but I have no money, and he went."

"What an escape," he exclaimed. She repeated the word after him, puzzled, until the meaning seemed to break on her with the sound. She laughed with a trace of uneasiness: "You think so? But I am still—curious," and she sat and watched him with shaded, serious eyes. "Of what?" he asked. "It seems to me that you must know everything which is worth knowing." His eyes swept back across the room, up the wall to the crucifix. He stared at it with a sceptical hope of enlightenment. "I envy you." He

had seen the effect of belief on many people. He knew it was regarded as a recipe for peace, an ingredient of courage. He waited for her to speak, to offer him something of her faith, but either she had not understood what he had said, or else she was determined that their converse should not soar again into any intimate and dusky realms. She watched him with an amusement that made him speak: "What do you want to know?" Brushing aside any deeper meaning, she held out towards him a thin, ringless hand that would have appeared ascetic without a certain nervous tremor of the fingers. These were, he felt, aware of all the senses, had as much power to tingle at a sound as to be soothed at the stroke of silk. They were curious fingers. "This," she said.

"Your hand." She shook her head, closing and opening her fist. "Fingers," he said, and she repeated the word after him, with her own discordant variation on the sound. She ran her eyes round the room pointing here and there, at a chair-leg, at the roses of the carpet, at the frame of a window, at the details of her own face, sometimes anticipating the word correctly, sometimes so comically wrong that he wondered whether the slip was intentional. At the first laugh she caused, he could read in her face a kind of exultant triumph, as if that were what she had set herself to gain. "Smile?" she challenged him, and he corrected her, "a laugh." For a moment they were silent in a kind of mutual amusement, without thought, without intention, in an amazing peace. But the peace was broken as soon as he became aware of it; it was a memory at which he marvelled, having

sought that very experience in darkness and weariness, to have found it in sunlight and freshness. She still retained it, even in motion, for she rose from the chair and came a little way towards him. It astonished him to see how she seemed to command it even when she spoke. She rules it, he thought, and it was she who gave it me, not I who won it. "And this?" she asked, her hands flung out in an amused and all-embracing gesture. "Peace," he said with the certainty that he had answered her question and that she had understood. The amusement faded. She was no longer queen of a precious quietude. The name, as always, had power to expel the thing it expressed, for the word "peace" when spoken brought to mind all its contrasts of tumult, fear, danger, and its undesirable ally, death. He could see the shadow of thought on her face as her hands went to her breasts, moulding them, showing him in her curved fingers their shape. Deliberately he misunderstood the gesture. "Your breasts," he said softly, seeing the barrier between them fall, prepared to step the small space between.

But a sound took the place of the barrier, the sound of a shutting door and of footsteps along the passage. The door opened and a voice announced "Señor Chase." But he still did not turn, failing to understand why anyone who called him friend should hunt him down and destroy that peace which for the first time he held in his fingers like a precious stone to examine closely and to marvel at. Eulelia Monti also remained silent in front of him with one hand moulded on a breast until, with the realisation of

the strange picture that they made, Crane surrendered silence and peace, reluctantly letting the jewel fall from his fingers. At least, he thought, I know now where I can find it. "Francis," he said, "what do you want?"

The significance of his first silence and his reluctant greeting was not lost, he could see, on Chase, whose eyes travelled slowly and with evident pain from one to the other of them. "I didn't know that you were here," he said. Again, as the night before, Crane became aware of how his friend's pain, however unreasonable, called for some kind of recompense; in this case, he knew, for trust. "Do you want to speak to Señorita Monti alone?" he asked. "I'll go." Chase had never stirred from the doorway. His position there gave an impression of humility; he seemed to admit his own intrusion and Crane's right to be there. "No," he said, and added with a trace of the previous night's bitterness, "You know each other."

Eulelia Monti had had time, it seemed, to perceive something of the position. She spoke to Chase in Spanish, but he answered her in English: "No, I haven't any secrets from my friend. If you can understand me——" "A little," she said. He flashed out at her then, an instinctive response like the growl of a hurt dog: "You understand him." But the exclamation, he tried to show next moment, meant nothing. "I've only come," he said, "to admit that I was wrong. I've thought it out during the night." He added unwillingly to Crane, "You were right. I had no business to say what I did last night. My

method was wrong." His last words came with embarrassing slowness and seemed to express an abysmal misunderstanding. "Caveda's too fine a man to be fought like that." Crane disowned the motive, repeating the expression with astonishment and protest: "Caveda a fine man." Chase ignored him, appealing for the first time directly to Señorita Monti: "Aren't I right to call him that? A fine man."

She used the same words to him as she had used to Crane: "He has charm. He is good-looking," but Chase accepted them in a very different manner. He was gratified by them, but seemed to desire further support. "He must be very brave," "Oh, yes," she said, "he is brave." She would never admit more than he had claimed, and Crane could see how her apparently grudging reply stung Chase into defence of the man he had never seen. "He's free from superstition. Not many Spaniards are as free." At first understanding failed her. Crane could see how she repeated the words to herself. Free-thinkers belonged as a rule in Spain to a lower class with whom she would have little contact. Perhaps Caveda, perhaps the dead barber, were the only ones she had known. But the meaning reached her at last; she countered it, and he admired the tact and perception which chose the sharpest weapon, with an entirely careless smile. "Oh, yes," she said, "he does not believe." She indicated the crucifix with her hand and spoke of Caveda with the same amused pity as she might show towards a person who could not read or write. Her tone struck Chase where Crane knew

that he was most vulnerable. It added itself to all those other spoken and unspoken accusations of stupidity, of which he was aware in Spain. His lips moved to protest, to argue. He even glanced at Crane as if to seek support. But he must have recognised that none was to be found there. He was as alone in that room as in a desert. All he said was, "I seem to admire your lover more than you do."

She contradicted him with her former uneasiness: "I am not his lover." She did not qualify her denial as she had done to Crane. "Not to-day. To-morrow perhaps."

Chase said slowly, recounting as it were the points in the indictment: "He was here last night. That photograph I showed you was his." She led him on: "Yes?" Crane, too, awaited the accusation which he felt certain would come, but when it came it was phrased in a way he had not expected and was spoken in a tone of pity, "So even you have deserted him." She left the open accusation unanswered and replied to the unspoken, "He does not want pity."

"I begin to think," Chase said, "that he wants a friend." He spoke broodingly with lowered head and for once Crane could not follow the course of his thoughts to their conclusion. Uneasily he doubted whether that course was wise or even safe and tried to deflect it. He said lightly: "Certainly he has one less." "Yes, one," Chase agreed, staring at the floor.

"But does that matter to him?" Crane argued gently. "You said yourself last night that San Juan was almost ready to rise. That doesn't seem to show a lack of friends. He will be able to put up his price

now." Chase ignored the last sentence. He was still thoughtful and spoke without either anger or bitterness, anxious only to see his way and be ready for reasonings. "I meant wise friends," he said, and, addressing Señorita Monti directly, "I thought at least he had you. His friends in San Juan are not wise. Look at last night. That was folly. They were drunk. They can't have known Caveda was in the town. They knew that the bridge was destroyed, and they thought that they had only to shoot a policeman for San Juan to join them. It was pure luck that Caveda escaped."

"Have you told to the police," Señorita Monti asked calmly, her hesitation due only to the difficulty of finding words in a foreign tongue, "that Caveda was here, in this house?"

"No," Chase said, "I thought then that you were his friend and that it would be only fair to leave him one wise friend in San Juan."

Eulelia Monti shook her head. "No," she said, "no. He might be my lover. I would not be his friend." Chase made his customary unwilling confession: "I don't understand."

Without stirring or making the smallest gesture of illustration or appeal, she said: "It is simple." She hesitated, before continuing to find words in English. The fact that she rejected the resources of Spanish, in which she could have made herself so easily understood, gave Crane the knowledge that above all she wished him to know her explanation. She sought help in what was rapidly becoming a kind of chemical formula expressing

Caveda, perhaps expressing, Crane thought, all of him. "He has charm. He is good-looking." She hesitated again, as if she felt the inadequacy of the formula, not for describing Caveda, but for containing her own attitude. "If he is my lover, what he thinks does not matter, but if he is my friend——" She stopped, laying the unfinished sentence before them as her whole explanation, appealing to their intelligence but not at all to their sympathy.

"Oh, if you mean a lover of that kind," Chase said with a certain contempt, and was interrupted by the first flash of anger that she had shown: "Do you think I would have him of any other kind?"

"I thought," Chase said, "that your religion counted it a mortal sin." His mind seemed very confused, contemptuous of her religion for its judgment, contemptuous of her for contemplating what it condemned. She showed no resentment that a stranger should question her life, only anxiety to lay her mind open before them. She said quietly, her anger gone, "And haven't I"—the word came oddly, with difficulty—"resisted it?" She explained further, stretching as it were the hands of her spirit towards them, imploring them to be reasonable, "If I gave way, would it be strange? I am young. I am curious." Crane remembered how she had used that phrase too before. She ended with an unexpectedly emphatic avowal: "I am low like all of you."

"No," Crane said, "you are not that."

She protested, "It is mortal sin," protested even with indignation, as if by defending her he was

attacking her faith. In that cause she was very ready to show anger. He was driven to a weak statement of fact: "But you have given nothing." His anxiety to excuse was evident, and it seemed to drive Chase to an almost impertinent condemnation: "I don't see the difference." Eulelia Monti at once accepted him as an ally: "You see. Your friend is right. Señor Chase is right." Crane did not answer. He was ready to accept that as the close, but Chase was less readily silenced. It appeared that he had taken her unexpected agreement with him as an encouragement to question. "Why haven't you married him?" Her answer was simple: "He is not a Catholic." It seemed to please Chase. "And wouldn't he become one?" he asked with the evident triumph of one confidently expecting a certain answer. But he could not have foreseen her reply. "If he consented," she said, "I would not trust him. And I would not marry him. I tell you I am not his friend." She added with emphasis, "I am nearly ready to be his enemy."

"Do you mean," Chase asked, "that you are ready to help us?" He spoke slowly as if he was unwilling that she should do voluntarily what he had tried to make her do unconsciously the night before. "How can I help you?" she said. "I tell you I am not his friend. I only know what he writes to me. He does not trust me with many secrets."

"I still can't believe you," Chase said. "I believe you are lying to us. Why did you follow us last night if you are not his lover?" "Oh," she commented, "I have given him something. Quiet here, rest, safety.

What was the word you said?" she appealed to Crane. "Peace," he said. She turned again to Chase with an extraordinary humility of explanation: "One would give that to anybody."

Crane interrupted with reluctance, aware again of the dark vigil of the future and all the terrors that waited before death. "To me? Would you give that to me?" "Of course," she said, "if I could; if you found it here, and you needed it." She did not wait for Chase's voice to thrust itself between them with his usual resentful avowal, but continued her explanation: "When one has given even so little as that, one has, one feels——" To her evident surprise it was Chase who supplied the word "Responsible." "Yes," she said, "that is it, responsible. You understand then?" He broke out at her in anger, "Do you think I can understand nothing, that I'm too stupid——" She stopped him with an astonishing avowal: "I like you now. You are very like Ramon."

He watched her; plainly suspected some joke behind the concealing candour and was determined to laugh first: "It's not so uncommon as you think," he said. "I have friends." She implored him, "Be patient. Don't lose them. You'll need them." The dark prophecy did not surprise Crane. We know each other, he thought, and stood apart, watching her try to make some kind of contact with his friend. She was telling a third with his consent a secret that they two shared, a secret of life, of terror and dismay, and the need of patience. "There was a man yesterday in an inn," Chase said, "who talked a lot of

nonsense about a friend. I thought he was trying to tell my fortune, but it was only a misunderstanding. I don't know what you mean, either."

"We three are here in San Juan," she said. "We can't get away. Something must happen to-day, to-morrow, perhaps the next day."

"The bridge may be repaired."

"Or Caveda may take San Juan."

"Even if that happens," Chase said, "it won't affect us. Caveda is your friend. I'm a newspaper correspondent." "You know me and Caveda knows me," she said. "You are tied to him." She added inconsequently: "I suppose those gloves were his. Even they fitted you." If Chase could not follow the new track her mind had taken, Crane followed it as closely as a shadow. He added to her comment: "Last night I mistook Caveda for you."

Eulelia Monti put her fingers across her eyes, as if a decision had to be reached in darkness. Dropping her hands then, with an intake of breath, she took a step forward and came between the two men with a deliberation that made her seem to shelter them from each other. She said to Chase: "Señor Chase, we are not strangers. How can I hope to hide anything? You must know me after six months." And when he watched her with serious, silent incomprehension, drew a sheaf of papers from her dress. "Why should you not have your own letters?" she asked with an odd lack of mirth and let them drop from her hands to the carpet with an effect of relinquishing something too unimportant to deserve even the muscular strain of a closed hand.

"Those are his letters?" "They are all I ever had from him." The small drift of papers lay like winter between them, across the blown petals of the carpet. They had the forbidding chill of unqualified truth. Like snow in a city street the whiteness of the paper was stained by dark tracks, purity tarnished by the passage of a living person. No one attempted to gather them from the floor.

"Do you not want them?" she asked, her eyes on Chase. "They are yours. Read them. Learn what you can." He bent to take them, his fingers reached them and trembled a little as though at the actual touch of ice, then he straightened himself with empty hands. "No," he said. "They are not mine," but Crane did not believe in the reason he gave. It was the expectation and the fear of truth, he thought, which restrained him. One did not care to see a man for the first time so completely off his guard.

"They are yours," Señorita Monti repeated. The brightness of her eyes recalled her mother to Crane's mind, as she named his friend without amusement, "Ramon."

"I don't know what you mean by it," Chase protested. "You were his friend. Why do you do this?" She put out her hand to him with the effect of an appeal, an appeal perhaps for him to recognise the completeness of her candour. She wished to hide nothing. There is nothing, she seemed to Crane to declare, enigmatical in me. If only he would make the effort to understand, she was promising him truth. But the worst of the world is, Crane thought, we are not accustomed to truth unaltered, unqualified, with

its shape revealed. Like a light flashed into darkness it blinds us and we talk of mystery. She seemed to take the word out of his mind and put it on her lips: "There is no mystery," she said to Chase. "I have never been his friend. I have never loved him. Whatever you read there, believe that—that I have never loved him. I have let him rest here, and not told the police. I have let him sleep and have not gone out and betrayed him. That was not friendship. It was letting him alone. I always thought him wrong, but he is brave; he has charm." She said with fierce hatred, "A woman wants a man like that at times."

"And now you've given him up?" Chase said.

"I tell you, I always thought him wrong, but I did not see the wrong with my eyes until last night."

"And what did you see last night?" Chase asked with impatience. "Only a dead man," he commented with an audible hatred of exaggerated values.

"Yes, that," she said, "and heard your lies." She thrust her fingers downwards. "Take them. What more did you want last night?" But it was Crane who bent to pick them from the floor. Someone must show, he thought with a certain deprecation, that he is not afraid of truth. Truth was something cold, controlled, impassionate. It was formed and limited by error. One knew in that calm country of deep snows, of vacant wind-deserted plains, nothing but one's present, one's past. It contained for him no fear, nothing worse than nullity, not disillusion but an absence of illusion. One knew in that land everything, recognised betrayal, became aware of deceit, but learned in the same moment all the reasons for

betrayal, all the motives for deceit. One knew and understood and sympathised. Against one's will, as the will had been known in the tempestuous dark regions of error, one had charity, but a charity which knew too much to suffer.

"Don't read them," Chase implored him, his eyes fixed with a reluctant hunger on the papers that perhaps contained all of Caveda that anyone but Caveda could know. The words reached Crane, but only as the echo of a faulty cry; the cry itself could not pass into the white land on the borders of which for a moment he lingered. It was the cry of a friend who desired his presence and feared to lose him, but if one penetrated far into that frozen inhospitable peace, one lost more than a friend, one lost all human company. But do I not desire that? he wondered. It was human company, full of error, temptation, diseases and brutalities that supplied the faces of his customary fear. "Shall I open it?" he asked aloud, addressing the words not to Chase who had protested but to Eulelia Monti who had commanded the act he hesitated over. "Yes," she said, "I told you to open it."

But the words gave him no satisfaction. They answered his question, but they did not resolve his perplexity, whether truth was too dangerous for a man still with so much of humanity about him. He had meant to say to her, Will you be there? to ask her whether there could survive any love in a region where appetite, desire, curiosity, mystery did not exist. Knowledge up to a point accompanied love, but love he could not believe would survive an

unrelieved certainty of every trait in her and in himself and of its own quality as well. And then across the glass of the religious picture he saw his image laid, a man lost in thought with only a bundle of another's letters in his hand. He laughed. "What a fuss about so little," and tossed them across the room to Chase. "There. Catch and read."

Chase caught the white bundle awkwardly. "Open them," Señorita Monti commanded him. Chase opened the first sheet reluctantly. "I want you to understand," he said, "that I shan't use them against him. I'm a reporter. I shan't take sides."

"One would think," she said, "that a lot had happened last night." She mimicked his impatience with a kind of controlled anger. "Only a dead man."

"I've seen you," Chase said. "I think I can trust you, and when you say that Caveda is a fine man——" "I never said it." He took no notice of her, engaged as he seemed wholly to be in straightening his tangled mind. "I've seen the other side. I've seen the way they shoot an unarmed man. You needn't fear that I'll do any more in future but report."

"I don't fear you." Eulelia Monti's eyes looked past him until she caught those of Crane. "The things I fear are not like you. Are we never going to hear these letters read?"

"If you don't want them," Chase said, "why not burn them? Why let us see them?"

She took no notice of him. "I want you to trust me," she said to Crane. For a moment she took on the appearance of her photograph, white, restrained,

conscious of rectitude, handsome but a little inhuman. "Even though I have lied, because I am a coward."

"You've every right to lie," Crane said. "I'm a stranger. The truth isn't for everybody." She came down from her pinnacle of aloofness and cried to Chase, "Read, I tell you, before I take them back."

There was silence, while Chase read the first letter over to himself. Uneasily Crane waited for some painful revelation. He found it easy to hate the bold assured handwriting that sprawled across the page with, he could swear, a complete disregard of niceties, shades, everything but a rough and egotistical purpose. He was aware of Eulelia Monti, again upon her pinnacle, with fear and sympathy intently put away from a mind fixed on an abstraction. The eyes would not see him, would not be aware of anger or contempt, the ears would not let Caveda's words pass in and disturb the mind from its contemplation. I am showing you myself at last, she seemed to say, pore over the page, con me, discuss me, but do not trouble me.

But in the first letter at any rate there seemed nothing to give cause for disturbance, though a little, according to Chase's view, for triumph. He had already, apparently, forgotten his reluctance to read, and was intoxicated by the sound of Caveda's voice. That voice came to him at first hand straight from the pages, with its individual twists and turns of Spanish idiom. It is natural, Crane thought, desiring only to be fair, that in translation it should be less convincing. "He's answering you himself,"

Chase said. "Señorita Monti must have asked him the same question, or made the same charge."

Barred as the ears had seemed they heard and did not let the words pass. "I asked nothing," she said.

Chase added, and the addition must have seemed weak even to himself, "Well, in any case he explains." "Explains what?" Crane asked impatiently. "Why he's continued to fight, of course, after Carlos's surrender." He thought a moment, already forgetful of his declaration that he would never use the letters. "This is useful, you know. We've never printed Caveda's point of view. Of course I wouldn't use this as a letter, but mightn't it be written up as an interview? Of course I should have to describe Caveda himself. Charm and good looks are too vague. Broad hands. Small feet. Careful of his clothes. But his face. Couldn't you let me have a photograph?" he asked Señorita Monti. She paid him no attention, and it was Crane who answered. "You have the letters. What more do you want? What does he say?"

"This," Chase said and began to read sentence by sentence, translating as he went along. "'You might say—Carlos has capitulated, surrendered his claim, why do you continue to fight? But I would ask you what Carlos has done for me, or for any of his officers, in return for our services. He's bought our lives. We can go to France and live there in poverty till we die, with no rank, not enough money to dress properly and keep up the sort of position a gentleman should. My family may not be as old as yours, but I like decency.' He repeats the word," Chase

said. "Decency. You say that's all selfish, but there are my men to be considered too. They can't go to France. I'll make the Government pay us to surrender. An amnesty all round, enough money for each of my men to buy a little farm or a small business, and for myself the least I can ask is a commission in the army—a colonel's commission—with full pay and a lump sum down. I should have a position to keep up.' It all sounds reasonable enough," Chase said.

"Reasonable, yes," Crane said. "It seems to me that you need more than reason to kill men."

Chase retorted with a certain gloom and a quality that Crane thought might be regret for a belief he had almost lost, "Men aren't so important." But women, it soon turned out, were important, at any rate to Caveda. In his second letter he was already admitting that and showed, by the confession, if not the growth of friendship, at least that of trust. It was extraordinary, Crane thought, how men who denied religion still seemed to retain the crying need of absolution. They would pour out their sins, not to a priest, but to a woman, and thought themselves purified by her comfort, the vulgar comfort of pity and admiration. Not that Caveda's was more than the general confession, "I am a man," which meant in that context as a rule "I am an animal," and he could not imagine Eulelia Monti giving him any plebeian absolution. The only comfort she could supply would be that of a general disgust—"we are all low, king and peasant, atheist and priest," low, he supposed she meant, compared with her high ideal of pain and

sacrifice, represented by the torments of her crucified God. But perhaps Caveda had found a greater comfort in the mere darkness of the house, the cold quiet passages, for already in the second letter he was thanking her for letting him rest there. "I want your picture," he wrote, "something which will remind me of your perfect calmness when you learnt my name. I may never have another opportunity of thanking you. If you are good enough to send me a message, let Jaime have it when he does your hair."

"He's cunning," Crane said. "That emphasis on danger. It's a good gambit to win sympathy."

"Isn't it true?" Chase protested. "It seems there was danger even in this house. He writes: 'Is there still any fear of your mother trying to earn the reward for my capture?'" They had both, in the fascination of listening for the tones of a voice speaking out of past weeks, forgotten Señorita Monti. They disputed over the character of the man, as if there was no one present who knew him face to face. She was a woman whose thin body seemed no more than a veil over the active quivering mind, and when that mind withdrew to contemplation, the body to all intents accompanied it. When she spoke they were surprised and a little embarrassed.

"Yes," she said, "that was another lie he made me tell. I told her that he was rich and that he wished to marry me. It kept her quiet."

"Was it a lie?" Crane asked incredulously.

"He is not rich, and I would never marry him."

"And yet," Chase said, "he seems to hope for

something of the sort." He dropped a second sheet of paper to the floor. "He sends you poems. He writes well."

"They are not his poems," she said with a flash of amusement.

"He chose them then," Chase retorted, as though even the question of Caveda's literary taste were one worth argument. "Ah, but one never knows," she said, and her voice, serious again, seemed to admit the point's significance. "He is a man who uses other men." Chase said with embarrassment: "I don't know why I should read all this. These are simply love letters."

"Love letters!" she said incredulously, "is that what you call in English love letters?" He ignored her irony, if it was irony. "I won't read any more." "Yes," she said, "you will read. You never know. You may discover something, something for that—what was your word——?" She left the sentence incomplete and repeated, "You never know." As a weak protest against her assertion he dropped a page to the floor unread, but on the next sheet something caught his eye.

"Crane," he said, "what was the name of the inn where you followed him?" Crane shook his head. "I don't know. It was too dark." Why should I admit, he thought, that I was afraid to come near the door? and remembered with apprehension the deserted entrance and the glint of a candle flame flashing from window to window, climbing upwards all the great height. "It was in a street to the right of the town hall, near the market place."

"That is the inn," Eulelia Monti said, and the tone of her voice made both men turn towards her. The music had gone from it, leaving its oddity behind as a series of sounds harsh, untuneful, dismayed. She took a step forward and it was as though she had taken also a step down, so that she was no more than a frightened woman on their own level. She said almost inaudibly, at the same time as she stretched out a hand apparently to take the paper, "Go on reading." It was Crane who saw her hand move out and then fall again to her side. Chase had already begun to seek the cause of her dismay in the letters. When he looked up again, she was already back in her fortress, her body no more than the shadow her mind cast outside its inaccessible home. "Oh, yes," he said, "I understand now. You were lying." She might not have heard the words, which were not spoken like an accusation. Chase was puzzled, that was all. "I don't understand," he said, "why you took the trouble. It's nothing to do with us if Caveda's your lover."

The revelation was to Crane a complete surprise. For once his understanding had failed him when he accepted her statement as the truth. The truth apparently was in the letter which Chase held, but it was a partial truth and did not belong to that cold land where everything was understood and there was no more pain. The degree of pain surprised him. It took the form of desire, a quickening of passion to possess, and at the same time the knowledge that he followed only where that dark natty dancing figure had preceded him. It took the form of an image, of

a foot-thick wall and Caveda seen through a crack between the bricks fingering the girl in the long grass. It took the form, even in the hard illumination of midday, of all his fears returning, peak after peak rising like volcanic islands from the surface of the globe, the first so close he stood already on its slope and knew the climb hard and immediate, with no more hope of the peace and respite he had found that day, half an hour ago, in sunlight and freshness. He looked across the heat and the blazing light at the girl where she stood against the wall in a perfect imitation of rectitude, and the sun burnt his mind into a dark ash and gave him the mercy of blindness.

"It's only your object which puzzles me," Chase was saying in a stiff embarrassed voice. "Of course I know you have the right to lie."

Crane found his voice then. The words had stung him like a blasphemy. "No," he exclaimed, "no right." The darkness shivered and broke, and across the shaft of heat and sun a white face turned towards him, losing its distance and impregnability. The lips moved, and the words broke painfully against the drums of his ears, as if the mouth were pressed against his face. "It was not here, never here. One night at the inn. That is all. I did not lie. I said—not to-day, nor to-morrow." She had said that she was low like all of them: she was at least low enough to argue, to explain. He heard Chase say with slight contempt now, as if he had been ready to allow any latitude to that distant, indifferent figure, but not to an ordinary woman excusing herself to a man, "You've a right to your pleasure."

"Pleasure, pleasure," repeated the voice at his ear, while the face twisted in the sunlight. "Do you call that pleasure? It may be for the man, but for me, for all of us, it's pain, pain." Something in the protest, some quality in it of fury and disgust, cleared Crane's mind. For a moment the immediacy of any sensation, that lifted a voice to a scream and the beat of another's pulse to thunder, gave way to peace and a blessed distance of time and space. A very long way away faces watched him and voices argued, a long time ago he had suffered pain which only served to make sweeter the present freedom from sensation. When he shifted his feet, he heard a distant sound and felt the movement as the memory of an action in the past.

Eulelia Monti said to Chase with an almost extravagant humility: "I am sorry. Your friend is right. It was a lie. But you can trust me. I shall tell Caveda nothing." Crane saw her turn towards him and heard her say with a paradoxical pride, "Forgive me." She was no longer at a great distance, and he felt the moment's peace quivering like a paper poster in the wind.

Chase held out the letters to her. "These are yours. I won't read any more. As for him, why should he have anything to forgive? Let's go, Crane." She answered his question, rhetorical though it was, with simplicity and complete certainty. "He has everything to forgive. He loves me."

The last words troubled Crane. They followed him like an invocation down the long stone passage he

trod at Chase's heels. They threatened to break the darkness and cool of that shaded road with a claim, the claim of one who shared his own belief that pain demanded recompense. She is ready to pay the debt, he thought, and his body stirred with a desire that had in it nothing of love. If I go back, she will give herself to me at the asking, let me finger her body as Caveda fingered it, play over with her the tricks I have learned in brothels, and his feet went slower as images crowded into his mind, bruising it the more with their contact in the very moment that they gave his body pleasure. He pictured with a deliberate brutality the secrets of her body that only she and Caveda knew, the shape of the breasts, the fall of the thighs. And at the end of all he knew that if he went back and made his claim, received the payment of his debt, she would be able to deny him friendship as she denied it to Caveda. To enjoy her would be to give her the opportunity of renouncing him. But what, he wondered, was the alternative? I do not love her now, he thought. My love was a feeling of passionate admiration for a rectitude she does not possess and a mystery which is shared, and the last he admitted, as the sun struck him in the face like the bright mailed glove of a challenger and sound came back with the ring of his own feet on the cobbles, was a common quality possessed by every virgin in the world; every whore once had it and traded it for a higher price than her body was ever to earn again. That kind of mystery was sent to market.

"Can we trust her?" Chase said. "That's what

worries me. If she tells Caveda——” But I know her better than that, Crane thought. I know what she means when she asks, “Why should I tell him anything?” A lover is not a friend. When he replied it was as if he were transmitting her thought, which had followed him from the room where he had last seen her standing with an expression of pride and unreasonable rectitude, down the dark passage, into the midday sun, from twilight to darkness and from darkness into the heat and flame, from silence to the noise of dogs and children and of women leaning out of windows. “What does Caveda matter?”

It was a different kind of importance that Chase claimed for Caveda, pointing up the street to two mounted soldiers, who let their horses amble gently up and down the cobbles, while the men bent their heads under the glare of noon. “Nearly every street is patrolled,” Chase said. “They are afraid of a rising. It’s my belief that the ammunition supply is low.”

“And if there’s a rising——”

“God help us,” Chase said, “if that woman lets Caveda know how I tried to spy on him.” It was a danger which did not, for the moment, affect Crane. Objects, buildings, men and women, soldiers, horses, the rifles laid across the saddles, a dog which began to skirmish at the animals’ hooves, were seen, noted automatically and dismissed. They made no sharp impression on the mind, were like photographs a little out of focus. It was the shadows across the road which he remarked. He walked among them and between them, as a man might pick his way

through a wood, allowing his mind to dwell on the shapes of the trees, imagining, here, where the bark had peeled, the features of a familiar face, and there, where lay a fallen branch, a woman's body.

A voice speaking sharply just above his head dispelled his self-made solitude, and looking up he saw a trooper's face and an importunate down-stretched hand. "He wants to see our papers," Chase said. Crane put his hand to his hip pocket, where lay his papers, the photograph of Eulelia Monti, and a bundle of notes. The man's face above him seemed to disintegrate, the outline of the jaw softened, the mouth fell a little open, and his eyes flickered from side to side, seeking his companion, who was already fifty yards away with turned back and slack unready reins. While Crane fumbled for his papers, the man bent down and began to speak rapidly to Chase with many conciliating gestures. "He says it's his duty," Chase explained; "that we must not be offended." The trooper took the opportunity to rein his horse a little back and to one side, so that he was partly sheltered from Crane by the horse's head. He gesticulated from one to the other, his fingers clutching nervously at his rifle, in which he apparently had a complete lack of confidence. "He says he can see that we are foreigners. He won't trouble us after all."

They passed the man, who watched them with indeterminate eyes, and Crane was able again to take refuge in that urban forest formed of shadows. The sound of hooves beating up the cobbles from the street end disturbed him no more than, lost in thought, he

would have noticed a horseman scattering the turf of an English ride as more than a sound accompanying the flow of images in his brain. I have had truth, he said to himself, and it has brought me pain. I am not yet ready for truth. We live all our life with evasions. We need more than a moment's training. He wondered: If I had felt no pain when I heard that she had lain with Caveda, should I have been happy? And the question robbed him of passivity. No, no, he almost cried aloud, this pain is precious; if I had felt no pain, I should have been damned indeed. There would have been nothing human left in me. I should have lost even the desire for her, the friendship of Chase, and every alleviation in a life of fear—colour and sound, the taste of food, the desire for virtue and the admiration of courage. And for the first time it occurred to him: Because I am a coward, am I fortunate? Are these terrors that I know await me to-day, to-morrow and every future day until I die, not my good fortune, the blessing of my birth, because I enjoy perhaps more keenly than others the alleviations? I am on the borders now of that cold inhuman land; I have only to relinquish pain, to know the truth and not to care, and I need never fear again. But all that he would lose passed by him like a succession of beautiful and deceitful images between the shadows, leaving him to make his choice between the lonely, fearless and comfortless truth and lies, evasions, compromises, fears, humanity. He heard no voice adding its appeal to the world's cause, until Chase cried into his ear: "Put up your hands quickly and turn round." The choice was made for

him, and quivering with fear, hands raised above his head, he turned his eyes aching into the glare of sunlight.

With raised rifles the two troopers let their horses amble slowly towards them. The man, who had a moment before so nervously evaded his responsibility, was swollen with triumph and importance. He was companioned. He spoke rapidly and shrilly, and his friend, dismounting under cover of his rifle, advanced cautiously to Crane's side. Chase laughed. "They think you are armed," he said. "When you put your hand into your hip pocket. . . ." He stopped and said with apprehension: "You don't keep a pistol there, do you?" An answer was unnecessary, for the pocket had already been emptied and the trooper was holding up for his friend's inspection a sheaf of twenty-peseta notes, and what atoned a little in their eyes for the lack of any kind of weapon, the photograph of a woman. They grunted their approval. A virtuous woman who knew her place was very evidently their opinion. They looked at Crane with more respect, and he saw the photograph relinquished into their hands without a qualm. Passed from the one to the other, shifted from hand to hand and from finger to finger, it was greased more and more by the contact of dust and rifle oil. It became, not Eulelia Monti conned by common men, but a Spanish woman of San Juan whose personality was formed by gazers and crude judges and the dreams of men. It had nothing to do with the woman who had sheltered Caveda and lain with him, who had lied and confessed her lie, and

retained at the last that spurious sincerity and confidence. When they handed it back to him with his papers, he placed the papers carefully in his pocket, but the picture he let drop on to the cobbles. Reining back their horses and swinging them round with a pressure of the heel, the men watched him out of dark perplexed faces.

"So you've done with her?" Chase asked him, fitting his steps to Crane's stride.

"That was only a photograph," Crane said. "If I want to see her, can't I go to the house?"

"One keeps a photograph," Chase said, "to remind one afterwards. It's useful for the memory."

But a memory of Eulelia Monti, Crane thought and did not trouble to answer, he would never care to retain. She was either worth more than that or was altogether unworthy of the briefest mental image. For a few minutes there had been between them a complete understanding. They had thought in common and to that extent they were part of each other. She might bear Caveda's seed in her body, but she had borne his thought in her brain. One did not trouble to remember one's own features in the past. One remembered only that one had loved, or felt pain, or gone hungry. I shall remember, without the aid of a picture, he thought, how fear left me for a moment, although I was not dead, asleep or even tired. If I never see her again, that will be for me her face, not a white forehead and the eyes set so or so, but a sense of peace.

The blinds of the house in the market place were down, and a group of men and women stood outside

examining the windows and the balcony with an interest that deserved more than silence, solitude and unmoving curtains. In the courtyard of the inn only a few tables were occupied. A man slept uneasily over his full glass, and the voices of the watchers blew with a windy melancholy across the square. Three troopers rode their horses backwards and forwards by the rowan trees and the flies buzzed in and out of half-emptied glasses, in and out of the yellowing leaves, and stirred the sleeper's hair. He relaxed still further under their torment and the heat, letting his head fall forward on his arms. Chase watched him with curiosity. "I think I know that man. If I could see his face——" He did not finish his sentence. In mid-thought he seemed struck with the lethargy that pervaded all San Juan. The little group of curious watchers, who could hope to see no more than a bloodstain on the balcony or the curtains part to show the pale face of a mourner, separated and re-formed constantly, like slow waves that climb and break and never advance, never alter. The horses moved under the rowans, but the riders slept. A dog scratched in the shadows and the insects hummed. Chase sat down at the table. "I've got nothing to do but wait," he said. "Perhaps there will be no rising. Perhaps nothing is ever going to happen again. I wish I was home."

"I shall go and sleep." Crane said. On the threshold he paused and looked back to see the hunched form of his friend, the broad hands flat upon the table, the face watching, waiting, ready for something to occur, but quite hopeless. He thought: He

is always the same. He doesn't lie to me. I can trust him in a way I could never trust a woman. With pain he realized that Chase could trust no one, not even his friend. Reluctantly he came back to the table and spoke to him, while Chase watched him with puzzled eyes: "I'm sorry. You've apologised, but I haven't. I'll never let you down again for a woman like that." By the last phrase he meant a woman who had lain with Caveda, a woman with a mark of rottenness, but the only image he could bring to mind was a face watching him with complete candour, while the lips admitted with an inhuman generosity any claim he chose to file.

Chase said: "You were right and I was wrong. I should have trusted her." Crane replied with anger, but the passion was not against his friend or against the woman, but against his own brain, which refused to supply a soiled image to illustrate his thoughts: "A whore."

"And haven't you," Chase said, "ever been with a woman for the mere desire, the pleasure? We can't judge her. We don't understand her." He added grudgingly, as though the thought irritated him: "I'm learning things in this country." But Crane protested: "I understand her, and therefore I can judge her." Faced by the other's incomprehension he tried to explain: "I judge myself." They lapsed again into a silence that could not help but be melancholy, and the shadows lengthening between them, as the sun moved across the sky, became a body which they regarded with differing emotions. A bank of cloud climbed up above the houses, and as it touched the

sun's rim, a cold wind blew. The dog rose and sought in the square a fuller heat. The group of men and women before the shuttered house shifted, scattered, disappeared, like sparks in a draught, and the man at the table moved his head uneasily upon his hands.

"If it had not been Caveda," Crane exclaimed with sudden anger, "if it had been anyone but Caveda." Chase, speaking to his broad hands spread face downwards upon the table, said: "She's beautiful. You were right and I was wrong. She has courage. And cleverness. You should have seen the way she fought me last night. She's worthy of Caveda."

"You've never seen him," Crane said, and realised the next moment how ridiculous was his own claim, for he himself had seen Caveda for no more than a moment under the swaying faulty glimmer of an oil lamp. The features he had never observed, only the small feet, the jaunty rhythmic dance, the somewhat "natty" clothes. But Chase took no advantage of his exaggerated claim. He said with the slowness of a man who was unaccustomed to following an abstract idea and who distrusted a little his own instinct to do so now: "I think I know him better for that. I don't understand you. I listen to you, but all the time I'm watching you. I might know you better if you were not here—two feet away from me." He laughed uncomfortably: "I like you too much, Crane."

It was a statement, Crane was aware, worthy of silence, worthy to lie beside the woman's image between them. On to the table fell now the first drop of

rain, deliberate, swollen, inevitable. "Do you love her?" Chase asked. There was enough apprehension in his voice to demand a truthful and considered answer. I loved her this morning, Crane thought, when she offered me peace. Now that she has given me pain, do I hate her, despise her, lust for her? "God knows," he said, and turned through a scurry of rain at the sound of footsteps. Through the thin chilling veil a figure danced towards them, glass in hand, progressing through the stages of a ritual of respect.

"Señor, señor," Chase nodded and rose from the table, as the rain blew in at them from the square, splashing them with tiny particles of dust, bearing a few yellow leaves that fell at their feet like coppers from a disdainful hand. "Come indoors," he said to Crane, ignoring the newcomer after the instinctive signal of recognition.

The face which had been bowed in respectful salutation was thrown back, with a long lock of black hair. "Señor, you recall me?" the man asked in broken and stilted English. "I am Emilio. It was only yesterday at the inn. A word in your conversation, señor, caught my ear."

"Which word?" Chase asked, pausing on the threshold and filling it, relegating the man to a dominion of rain, unoccupied chairs, and half-filled and empty glasses. The Spaniard smiled, his hand gesticulated before their faces like a conjuror's, showing them that it was empty of everything but friendship and helpfulness—no rabbits, no rolls of paper, coloured flags or pigeons. "I was asleep,

señor, till it began to grow cold, and as I woke I heard the word."

"What word?" Chase repeated with impatience. The man came a little nearer and with the formal bow of a shopwalker from the hips, said in a low voice, "'Whore,' señor." He began to speak rapidly: "Yesterday, señor, I offered my services and you refused them. Perhaps you have changed your mind. There is so little entertainment to be found in San Juan. Or perhaps your friend——"

"I don't understand what you are offering me?" Crane said.

The man opened his arms wide as if to embrace San Juan with its whole complement of emotions, fears, hates, desires. "Ah, señor, what can I offer? I can offer what every man expects of marriage and what every man fails to find. For what is there in a wife, señor? If she is virtuous she learns only the devices she is taught by her husband. Her tricks are the dull tricks of virtue." The dark face under its falling lock was lit with a genuine passion. The man might have been a new Evangelist preaching a gospel to the Gentiles. Strange, Crane thought, that his gospel should be the oldest that had ever won disciples. Other faiths had worn less well. He approached them, no longer on dancing feet, but with the shuffle of a man too absorbed in his own speech to trouble about his movements. "Señores," his earnestness won their respect and attention, even while the subject repelled them, "do not send me away. I can show you things in San Juan." His eyes went beyond them to recall sights

which they had never seen. But there was nothing salacious in his gaze; something he was watching with a long passion of devotion. He might have been seeing beneath the surface with which he tempted their animal desire to a core of beauty that the mind was enraptured with. Is it perhaps only nullity, Crane thought, a blessed vacancy that comes when the body is satiated, the only peace that until to-day I thought I should ever know? The idea, however it dignified the man with a thought not his own, raised Crane into a determination to oppose. A brothel would not rouse his anger. They had helped him in the past to a kind of happiness, and he supposed they would so help him again, but this that the man seemed to stand for was more than lust; it was the ultimate desirability and ultimate beauty of sterility. It was something worthy to be a creed and worthy to be fought.

"What things can you show us?" he challenged, ready to call all the army of his enemy into a beautiful array and watch their banners unfurl.

The man turned his eyes away from Chase to meet his opponent. "A girl of seventeen," he said, "who has learnt her trade in the best brothel in Madrid." The words were flung out crudely, but the brain behind the eyes seemed unsoiled by any image. This, he might have declared, was only a means to an end far more desirable than passion. Why should one trouble about the palette, when the picture is before one? He appeared to Crane contemptuous of customers who allowed themselves to be excited by the mere means. But am I

lending him a dignity, he wondered, which is not his own, and he threw him into the overcast day a question from the answer to which his attitude could be drawn. "Why should I be attracted by that?" It was the question every man asks at the moment of satiety when the body has lost its power.

"Are you not a man, señor?" the Spaniard asked. He straightened himself from a position of Semitic humility and moved his shoulders with disdain. "Do you expect me to soil my lips with all the secrets of the brothels? Taste for yourself, señor, if you are a man."

"Come away," Chase said. "Why do you want to argue with the fellow?" But the "fellow," to Crane's mind, had an interest and a dignity which his friend did not possess. His friend was, in some sort, the modern world. He was a sceptic who was not even easy about his materialism. But this pimp, he believed, had a faith, even if it was a wrong faith, and a believer of any kind is worthy of an opponent.

"Listen," he said. "You can't tempt me with your talk of brothels. I know the secrets you speak of. They are these, nothing but these. A manageress in velvet with a mass of hair and a smile. A drawing-room with cheap mirrors and a red plush sofa. And finally a rather squalid bedroom with lace curtains, not quite clean sheets, a dressing-table littered with hair combings, some tied twigs withered and broken, and a naked, ill-shaped prudish woman, who is determined to give as little as possible for your money."

The pimp shook his head. "I do not understand

all that." He smiled and flashed his eyes upwards to Crane's face. It was a look of recognition, as between two acquaintances who meet each other with a spurious sentiment in a foreign land. "You leave out all that is important. Afterwards——?"

"I will tell you about that too," Crane said with enmity. "Afterwards there is exhilaration and a freedom from the body." "Yes," the man nodded, "yes." "It lasts," Crane continued, "perhaps for an hour." He said with no expectation of being understood, "Is that the sort of peace a man has the right to expect?" To his astonishment the man replied with a frown and a sombre recognition of a partial truth. "It is something, señor. It is the best one can do."

"No," Crane said, "no." The position of Evangelist seemed reversed. It was he now who bore a message and the young man who listened with doubt. "I found another way this morning."

"A woman," the man protested. "It is the same thing in or out of a brothel."

Chase laughed. "This pimp is a philosopher." The man turned his eyes and with hands held palm upwards accepted with calmness the title given in mockery. "I am Emilio, señor. Ask anyone in San Juan, they will know me. I am a pimp, if you like to call me so, yes. And I bear the mails. And drive the coach to and from Aljerema. And I am also a poet, señor."

"Well, poet," Chase said, "we are not going to visit your brothel." "And yet," the man said with a hidden impertinence, "it would suit you, I think."

Perhaps not your friend. He is too exacting. But I have wasted many opportunities chatting here, señor. It would seem only fair to pay me for the entertainment I have given you. Besides, it is wet standing in the rain." He raised his coat collar and gave a long affected shiver.

"Come away, Crane," Chase said and turned his back on the thin figure, poised with apparent insecurity on black and shiny shoes. Crane said thoughtfully, "He's right, you know. I needn't have kept him here." He held out his hand. "This is payment for an unpublished poem." The man took it and eyed the note. "You are generous, señor," he said. "Your countrymen are generally either very virtuous and kick me away when I suggest a visit to my brothel, or else they come with me and are afterwards very virtuous and kick me away. The difference in their kicks is very slight."

Crane laughed and turned to follow Chase, but the man's voice pursued him. "Señor, there was another word I caught." They paid him no attention, mounting the wooden stairs to their room. He called after them, "I cannot shout it, señores. It is for your secret ear. Wait until I come." Following them with pointed toes he continued to beseech them. "It is for your good. I am not a man to accept a debt." He reached their side and after a long gaze over the stair rail, whispered, "Caveda, the word was Caveda." Crane said, "We are not interested," but Chase contradicted him, "If you've any news, follow us."

The door closed behind them and the three men

stood together in an unwilling propinquity, shared by the iron bedsteads, the ewer and basin, and a rush-seated chair. The close walls forced them together until, like suspicious dogs, they were aware of each other's smell, Emilio's winy and acrid. "Sit down," Crane said, and pushed the chair towards him. The man removed his black skull cap and blew some dust away, as if he wished to show them that he too had the tidy instincts of a gentleman.

"What do you know?" Chase asked. His abruptness antagonised the man, who sat down with grace and an exaggerated ease. "If there was a glass of wine," he suggested. Chase poured one out and he drank, curling his tongue over his lips and sniffing at the glass. "You, señor, are a newspaper man?" he suggested, and when Chase nodded, he murmured, "I understand newspaper men have a liking for danger. It makes what you call a story." He became expansive: "Doubtless you wonder at my excellent English. But I have not always lived in San Juan. For three years I was in London at a restaurant. You know Leicester Square. A wonderful place. And a wonderful country. My admiration for your papers——" He waved his hands. "*The Times, The Telegraph*. We have nothing like them in Spain. We have not your civilisation, have we, señores? You know Riego. What an uneducated man! Caveda is different. Caveda is young like I am, a Liberal like I am. Not a superstitious Catholic. He cares nothing for the priests."

"We know all this," Chase said. "If you have nothing to tell us——"

The man looked up at them under heavy thoughtful brows. "He was here in San Juan yesterday. Tell your paper that." He sank back in the chair, crossed his legs and sipped the wine. Mutely his lips criticised its quality, curling superciliously. The man's attitude amused Crane, but Chase it angered. He broke out rashly, "We know that too. We saw him ourselves."

"Saw him?" The man for a moment revealed his amazement. Then his subtle mind continued what Crane began to believe was an elaborate insult. "Well, señor, that is not all I can tell you. If I could have another glass of wine, it would cheer me. It has been a depressing day. San Juan is growing too virtuous." Chase filled his glass, and again the man sniffed and tasted. "This scoundrel of an inn-keeper is defrauding you, señor. Your wine is of very inferior quality. I will speak to her about it." He became convulsed with a hidden mirth, and his hand shook, so that a few drops splashed his hand and sleeve. Crane said softly: "Francis, unless he has anything important to tell us, we can spare him the trouble of waiting. We are keeping him from his poetry."

"You are very polite, señor," the man said, allowing for the first time a hint of enmity to appear in his speech, "although you are too good for my brothel. You shall be rewarded. I have information which will excite you. But a moment. I am afraid this wine will stain my coat. May I use your basin?" Without waiting for permission he crossed the room and tried to lift the ewer. "Ah, my weak wrist," he complained.

"Don't touch it," Crane said, but Chase had already stooped, lifted the jug and filled the basin. The man smiled at Crane over his shoulder, smelt the soap and began to lave his hands. "It is a long time since I have seen a piece of English soap," he commented with a too friendly grin.

The complicated insult to which he was subjecting them was at last plain, but Chase was still unwilling to sacrifice the hope of information. "I'll give you a minute," he said. "If you have a story, you'll be paid well for it."

The man let his long graceful hands stir the water. "I do not ask for any payment, señor. Have you not given me hospitalities?" He drew his fingers from the basin, letting the drops scatter over floors, walls, ceiling, beds, and turned on them with an enigmatic rage. "Yes, I am a pimp, señor, and I keep a brothel, and I am a poet, and that is funny, is it not? But you have given money to the poet 'for an unpublished poem.' That was a good joke, was it not? But the pimp, ah, the pimp, you have invited into your room, and sat him in your only chair, and have given him wine. And you have let him wash his hands in your basin, using your English soap, and you, señor, were such a perfect host that you poured out the water yourself for the pimp. The pimp thanks you for your hospitalities, and will be going, now that he has seen how humble, virtuous Englishmen will wait on a pimp, if they think he has anything of value to give them."

The man rocked backwards and forwards on his shiny black shoes, convulsed with an obscure rage.

"Get out," Chase said with a carelessness that enraged him the more. He had hoped perhaps for the contact of physical violence as intimate as a friend's embrace. "I am going," he said; "I do not wish to have more of your hospitalities. It is not to my taste. The wine is bad. I give better wine to my girls than that. But all the same, señores, I do know something, which you would give me much money to know before to-morrow. The Commandant would reward you, but you do not know it. You will not come to my brothel, and you think San Juan a dull place. Stay a little longer, señores, a very little longer." He opened the door and balancing on his toes made them an elaborate bow. He could not keep his pose and stumbled, and for the first time the idea that he was drunk crossed Crane's mind. As the man turned, Crane crossed the room to close the door and saw at the same time that the passage was not empty. A few yards away the landlady was sweeping the floor with a concentrated attention and a noise that had been inaudible through the closed door. For a moment Crane thought that Emilio intended to step back into the room. He could not see his expression, but the insulting set of the shoulders had given place to a humble or perhaps frightened curve. But what can he fear? Crane wondered, and one answer was supplied to him by Chase, speaking so close to his ear that his nerves jumped at the sound. "He thinks she heard what he said about her wine. Look at him, creeping by her, hoping to pass unnoticed."

It was a possible explanation, but one which did

not satisfy him. I have not lost all my power of seeing, he thought, now that I am no longer deaf. I can still believe that I see character in a man's shape and how a woman holds herself. That pimp has courage. He insulted us in a way that gave us the best opportunity for violence, and now, is he frightened because he criticised a woman's wine? She was not a terrifying woman, as she brushed the passage with her long broom in rhythmic sweeps, musical in its rising and falling "hush" of sound. Her glance this way and that, very amiable, very explanatory and a little harassed, was a kind of mental equivalent to the straying dyed hair that blew into eyes and mouth as she moved. Nor after all did Emilio hope to pass unnoticed. He stopped and said something in a low conciliatory tone. "He's excusing himself," Chase said. The woman eyed him with a kind of maternal reproach that seemed to bear out Chase's explanation, but Crane remained unsatisfied. The woman spoke, and it seemed unnatural to Crane that she should speak so low. If she were defending the quality of her wine, surely her voice would be raised to carry her defence to all the inmates of the house. A whisper admitted the truth of his words, or at least Crane thought, his mind going back to Emilio's last speech, of some of his words. Emilio was affirming, denying, explaining, while the woman listened, expressionless now. It was as if her mind was made up, and nothing that the man said could alter it. The human feeling of reproach was no longer apparent, neither was anger, only an inhuman air of inflexibility. The broom was as motionless as a stone pillar,

and the hair that blew out round her face, whenever a draught crept up the stairs, belonged to her as little as clouds belong to the Divinity they hide. "The old idol," Chase said, astonishing Crane at the closeness with which he had shared his thought. Emilio argued. He bore his argument forward on the palms of outspread hands, reasonably, conciliatingly, but if his words had been a desert wind blowing across the worn Sphinx face they would have been more likely to alter the stone countenance than his human entreaties could affect that inhuman woman. "Is all this about a bottle of wine?" Crane whispered with incredulity.

"Juan, Juan," the woman called and unwillingly up the stairs came her thin, depressed husband. His depression seemed to be heightened by what they had to say to him. His hand went from scanty hair to small moustache and thence along the line of the jaw, up and down, up and down. Emilio's movements became sharper, more nervous. His hand sawed the air. He was no longer, Crane thought, being reasonable. His voice broke suddenly and one word became audible "Mañana"—to-morrow—in a tone hard to define. There was foreboding in it, Crane thought, and there was depreciation. Did this too concern wine? and ironically there sang itself into his brain that sentimental and impossible advice—"Eat—drink—for to-morrow . . ." Whatever the word meant, the heightened tone of it aroused both the woman and her husband to the fact of an audience. She made some comment and the two left her, treading down the stairs slowly, side by side, their eyes on each

other, like two new-comers to Hades, Crane thought, each suspicious that the other would try to leave him on the downward path alone and to escape into the upper air.

The woman approached, trailing the broom behind her. Her attempt at an amiable smile did not alter the impersonal resolution of her features. Her smile was like the play of light on a still pool that bears a superficial resemblance to movement. She spoke softly to Chase in Spanish and then turned to follow her husband. But Crane was so placed that he could see her features alter as she turned. He could see the lines of resolution melt into compassion and, he was certain, a kind of mild horror. On hesitating feet she passed him, but before she reached the stairs resolution had returned to her tread.

"She asked us to forgive the presence of that drunken fellow," Chase was saying; "she'll see that he doesn't return. She also said that she was sending up some new bottles of wine. Her husband had made a mistake and sent us up some inferior stuff. So she was listening. That was what frightened Emilio."

"Could you have believed," Crane said, and the well of the stairs down which the three figures had disappeared became to him a gateway of new terrors, which for once he had not foreseen, "that that woman would have the cunning to tell you that?" There was a sense of indecency, of unfitness in nature, in even connecting that amiable harassed housewife with so furtive and clever a quality. "Did you hear what he said? Mañana. What has to-morrow got to do with wine?"

"You take the whole thing too seriously," Chase said. "There might be any number of connections. Take one, the arrival of new stock." "No," Crane said, "that wasn't it. Remember his voice."

"The man was drunk. I don't know what's frightening you. There's one thing 'mañana' can mean, if you are afraid. You can leave to-morrow." "Yes, or to-day," Crane said without conviction, contesting for the second time that day a false comfort. I've been offered a woman, he thought, and I've been offered flight. Is the one any better than the other? Will one last longer? and he remembered with a sense of homesickness the peace he had found that morning. That peace had lasted for seconds only, but he could recognise in it a quality of timelessness, which flight could not possess. Those seconds might have never ended; they might have become eternity. He could not remember their birth; springing as they did from no conscious act of his, they seemed to have had no beginning; he had become conscious of the existence of peace, but the peace had been there always, not bounded by the walls of the room, which was tagged down by every nail, by every board, by every picture to space and time, not enclosed even in the body of Eulelia Monti, a body which belonged to San Juan and the man who caressed it, but bounded only, if the infinite can be a boundary, by the belief in the mind of the woman. But if I leave, he thought, I belong to time; my relief from fear is contained by time, every beat of my horse's hooves is a measure of time and emphasises the period of it, every shadow that falls across the road, every voice

I hear calling, threatens that too fragile peace. Without a companion, he thought, it might not last a mile outside San Juan. He said: "Would you come with me?"

"Not to-day," Chase said. "I must be here to-morrow."

"Why to-morrow?" "The barber's funeral is to-morrow," Chase said, and in the silence that followed Crane knew that they had both recognised the significance of those words—to-morrow—'mañana.' He sat down on the bed and covered his face with his hands, shutting out in their cool darkness the overcast day and Chase's inquisitorial face. Why am I in San Juan? he wondered, and had to admit that the only reason was friendship. A feast day at Seville, the changing of the guard before Alphonso's palace in Madrid, the Prado, and long sardonic Velasquez features, bent hopelessly on salvation: these had wearied him. The war was over, it was only three days' journey to San Juan and the mountains, it was two years since he had spoken to Francis Chase; there was no more to fear, he had thought, in San Juan than in Madrid, in Madrid than in London. The fears were different, that was all. Even a quarrel was better than loneliness. It was sometimes as though his body was burnt away, leaving his brain exposed, a quivering organ unprotected from cold or heat, terribly percipient, and no less gross for the loss of its physical sheath, for the body was never more than an exaggerated reflection of the brain's process. The flesh would not move with desire if the brain had not first stirred. In Madrid there

came to him a different fear, the fear of eternity. In the past he had at least accepted a period to his fears; death, of which he was terrified, was to that extent inviting. There the fear of no-end came to him down a dark narrow street of modern grey houses with the sound of chanting, then the odour of incense blowing in the draughts from doorways, then the stirring of the earth with footsteps, then the sight of a banner and a canopy and a priest bearing the Host.

"You could leave to-day," Chase said, "there's nothing to keep you," and Crane was aware that he was speaking without condemnation. He dropped his hands and let the daylight come into him with pain. "Do you think that?" he asked.

"Unless," Chase said, "Señorita Monti——" His voice had a strained absence of emotion, which roused Crane to the kind of protest which was not common in their friendship. "It's not she who would keep me. It's you."

Chase said gently, as if Crane's departure was fixed, "I should like to come with you. It was good, you know, yesterday, to find you here. But I can't very well leave now, if there's a chance of something happening."

"Isn't it obvious," Crane said, "that that man gave away more than he ever meant to? That Caveda's planned to make use of the funeral to-morrow for an outbreak. It's the ideal moment, with the road to the south broken."

"Your road," Chase commented.

"There should be no danger for a man travelling alone. I'm a foreigner. I've nothing to do with them."

When I have gone, I suppose you will warn the Commandant."

"There's so little to go on," Chase said unwillingly, "not much more than one word, 'mañana.' You can't expect a soldier to take any notice of atmosphere, intuitions . . ." He walked to the window and gazed out into the square. His forehead was lined with perplexity. "Besides, what is it to do with me? I'm not a Spaniard." He turned and begged without anger for enlightenment. "Why should Caveda not have his chance?"

"One must always take sides," Crane said with a sombreness that was a reflection of his thoughts. His thoughts were no more than selected memories driving him from San Juan back to Madrid, back to England, away from the only genuine peace he had ever known. "Seconds" his brain mocked, to be answered as promptly by something apart from the perceptive, fearing, quivering brain he was familiar with, something which might have been a woman's voice speaking in the air of the small inn room, "Eternity." But that is a fallacy, he argued. You are deceiving me with thoughts as you deceived yourself with your body in another inn room very like this. It was not eternity; it had no beginning, but it had an end. "You returned into time," the voice said and added with some of the sharp irony Eulelia Monti might have been expected to show, "You are not eternal. That I never said. But it was not the peace that ended. It was you who left me." That quiet voice from an invisible source was as much a threat to his flight as a ham-strung horse, a broken bridge, a file

of armed men across the way. He contested it with a succession of images—night and a figure with bent peering head poised under the lamplight, the rush of horses and a voice crying orders, the landlady trailing her broom after Emilio down the inn stairs. "It's not the danger that matters," the voice whispered, between the iron bedsteads, over the spilt water, "it is the fear of danger. Stay here and give me one more chance." He said again, with his head in his hands, torn by the necessity of a decision between his brain and what he supposed could only be his emotion, "One must always take sides."

"You are not," Chase said, "you are leaving." Useless, Crane thought, to explain to him that if I leave San Juan I have taken a side as definitely as if I went out to shoot Caveda with a revolver in my hand. "I may not go," he said. Chase made no comment. He was watching the square. "The sky's clearing," he said, "but the worst heat will be over when the rain has stopped. You ought to be able to reach Aljerema before dark." He leant his forehead on the glass and said in a voice unnaturally casual, "I suppose you'll make an early start to-morrow. Beyond Aljerema the road is good. Will you change your horse? With a fresh one, you would only have one more night between you and Madrid. Fun, those nights by the road in small inns, when you have a good bed waiting for you at the end. I enjoyed every yard of the way the last time I went south a year ago. The second night I met an Englishman, a commercial traveller. I suppose we hadn't an idea in common, but it was a blessed thing just being able to talk

about the weather in one's own language."

"I haven't been much good to you here, I'm afraid," Crane said. "I've spoilt one of your plans. That's about all."

"No, you've done me good," Chase said, allowing a certain measure of feeling to come back into his voice. "It's been a relief even to quarrel with one of my own kind. This country was affecting my nerves. The strange standards they have, the importance they put on death, the superstition. It's a dark atmosphere in the mountains, you know. Smoke and flames, the fear of hell, no gaiety, only small bitter songs about love betrayed and death, and all day long, as they believe, God being swallowed alive in their dismal churches. That's why I sympathise with Caveda. He stands outside all that. No, I want clearer information of his plans before I warn the military now. I've given them information before and got little thanks, just because they lost a man—one man, mind you, and this is supposed to be a war. I think it was because he died without a priest. What difference does that make when you are dead?" The question was less rhetorical than it sounded, for he had turned from the window to make it.

"To them," Crane said, uneasily avoiding the directness of the question, "I suppose it may mean the difference between heaven and hell."

"But to you?" He felt the dogged quality in the voice, the insistence on an answer, and it angered him. Have I not enough to think about, he protested, without being forced into a theological argu-

ment? What right has he to probe my thoughts? and knew, even while he questioned the right, his unfairness, for he himself never consented to leave another mind unmapped. He must always be affixing labels and symbolic figures in the manner of old cartographers with "Here are fears. Here Superstitions dwell. Here Purity. And here Lust reigns." "To me?" he said. "I can't tell you. I don't know." It was not enough to satisfy the eyes that watched him with unease. He broke out angrily, "If Hell means pain, fear, mistrust of oneself and everyone, then I believe in Hell, and why should there not be heaven too? Heaven, I suppose, would be peace, and one has had that for long enough to know the lack of it. It's like the drop of water Dives prayed for, but he was lucky enough to be refused." He added with what he could see Chase thought a perplexing illogicality: "I won't go. I'll stay." His decision, little as it satisfied him, did this much; it drew Chase's mind away from the question he had asked. "I'm glad," he said. "I was afraid I had lost you," and the silence which followed made the words seem to echo on through the poverty of the room and lent them a deeper significance than perhaps they were meant to possess. It seemed to Crane that Chase feared to lose more than a bodily presence; that he feared to see his friend absorbed into that hostile region of the mind which dealt in flames and ecstasies and the daily sacrifice of a God. And is he right? he thought. Has he cause to fear that he will lose me there? If I could experience the ecstasy, he thought, as I have experienced the pain, then indeed I should

be a likely recruit to that two-sided banner of promises and threats. If I could experience the love as well as the wrath.

Chase said from the window, "They seem friends again."

"Who friends?" Crane asked momentarily puzzled. It was as though Chase had announced an armistice between heaven and hell. "Emilio and the others. They've been drinking well, he and the husband, and now they are going across the square." He laughed with a lightness that might have borrowed its quality from his relief at Crane's decision. "So unsteadily. Look."

It was true. The two figures that now assisted each other across the square seemed quite divorced from fear or cunning. Emilio stumbled at every step, leaning heavily upon the more sober Juan, who was bent by his burden. Two troopers brought their horses side by side and watched the precarious progress. Their laughter came in through the open window and filled the room with a sound which should be sympathetic or care-free, but was in this case shrill, personal, a little cruel. A spear of sunlight pierced the clouded sky and followed the uncertain pedestrians like a spotlight following two comedians into the wings. The sight of his own shadow springing from his side brought Emilio to a halt. Still holding his companion's shoulder he bent towards it, apostrophised with sawing hand and nearly fell upon his face. Juan supported him and urged him on.

"Juan is sober," Crane said. Chase laughed:

"Emilio had a start. He must have been drinking fast since he went downstairs." As the figures began to reach the limit of his vision he grew serious, leaning out of the window, following their movements as far as he was able. "They are in the side street where you saw Caveda go. I can't see the inn from here. Why should Juan take him to a rival inn?"

"Why, if it comes to that," Crane said, "have they filled him with wine? So quickly, you noticed it yourself. Can't you imagine them down there, standing over him while he drank, never letting his glass be empty? As for why, let's hope it's only to get him into a stupor, so that he'll let no more secrets escape."

"Yes," Chase said eagerly, "yes. That must be it. What else could it mean?"

"I've read somewhere that they make condemned men half unconscious with drink or drugs before they hang them. But that's in our own humane country. One doesn't expect it here." He spoke lightly, not meaning what he said, but remembered at the very moment that silence took his words, the face of the elderly woman and how it had melted like a leaden image under heat from the appearance of an inflexible divinity to that of a suffering pitying human being. There was no question but that she at least had humanity. The woman had shown him her face, but she had not disclosed it to his friend, and he had no reason to suppose that Chase would share this fresh cause for uneasiness. Chase had said that soldiers could not be expected to value atmosphere or intuitions, and impercipient was a quality, Crane thought, his friend shared with soldiers. He was sur-

prised when Chase turned away from the window and said to him in a low voice, apparently in an attempt to express his thoughts directly without any censorship of habit, reason and embarrassment intervening: "Go. Please go. You can be in Aljerema to-night. Take my horse. He's in first-class condition. Look, the sun's coming out. There'll be no more rain before evening."

"But why?" Crane cried, "why?" It was not a call for explanation, but for persuasion. Give me reasons, give me reasons, he longed to implore. Shout them into my ears, so that I cannot hear a voice speaking out of the air, accusing me of cowardice—but that does not affect me, I have been aware of my own cowardice all my life—telling me that the peace I gain in flight is temporary and the peace I leave behind eternal. It was the kind of hateful paradox, he thought, to be expected of the woman who had lied to him with such an appearance of integrity.

"Listen," Chase said, "you are of no use to me here. But you can do something for me if you leave to-night. The telegraph wires are down. You can take a message from me and telegraph it from Madrid." He held out his hands with a gesture of pleading that was entirely alien to him. Even with his mind torn by the necessity of decision Crane was able to wonder at the change, to notice with amazement how much Chase had absorbed of the country he hated. "Those are reasons, important reasons. But the chief is this—I want you to go. I've played too dangerous a game here, and I don't want the

danger to touch you. Please go, Crane." The note of pleading, the foreign gesture, brought them more nearly together than they had ever been. It was the fact of Chase's alteration into someone more uncertain, and withal more alive to shadows, evasions, hidden meanings, that emphasised the unchangeable quality in him. Crane thought with humility and yet with a certain resentment: He is more fond of me than of anyone else. I am in his debt for that, for I cannot repay in that almost measureless kind. I am fond of him, but he has nothing to offer me. He cannot give me relief from fear, only a flicker of exaltation in a type of love that has no desire and, therefore, no satiety. "Please go, Crane," Chase said again, and it was typical of him that even now, when he must have realised the closeness of their union, he used the formal name, as though the consciousness of how little he knew of Crane's mind compared with what Crane knew of his was still a barrier between them.

But to drown the voice something was required more shrill, more urgent, something that would pass the conscious brain unintercepted and stir the animal senses that knew only the safety represented by life; touch, smell, taste, sight. It came in the form of a scream cut short; that hardly aroused even the momentary attention of the soldiers in the square. A woman beaten, a child in pain, a baby's birth, there were a dozen explanations. Not a single window in the square went up, nor a door opened, and not a face showed the least curiosity or surprise. "I'll go," Crane said.

But he went sadly. There was no pleasure in his going, even when his decision seemed to become irrevocable with the smell of horse dung and straw in the dark stable of the inn. Only a little light crept in through one small window; in a corner a smith struck sparks from the horse's hooves and the forge glowed in twilight. In a week, he thought, I shall be back in England, but the idea gave him no joy, as, he knew, it would have given Chase. Chase was a man of straightforward ambitions. He believed that a man of thirty-five should have married and already produced the first of the fashionable long line of children. He belonged to the world of tall gas-lit London houses and a country of hedges, red walls, and boisterous aggressive dogs like public schoolboys, to church on Sundays, high pews, and a sermon that contained no difficult or uncomfortable doctrine. It should be he who goes and I who stay, he thought, and as a small breeze came in through the open door and blew the sparks in a cloud towards the roof, he ceased to believe in the reality of the act on which he was engaged. There could be no such thing as fate, no power impelling him towards his next fear, if the incidents he had witnessed in San Juan were about to belong to a past unrelated to his future. Certainly he was about to ride out from the inn stable, taking the road to Aljerema, but he did not believe that he would be allowed to reach Madrid. Somewhere on his way San Juan would stretch out a tentacle to draw him back or perhaps only to touch and leave him lying. Why should he have been brought there, if he could escape so easily?

Riding in to the market place, he looked up to see Chase at the window. He raised a hand and turned his horse into the long street that led to the Aljerema gate. The tall straight houses, balcony above balcony, cast their shadows across his path, black strips alternating with the white dust laid by the rain, until he might have been treading the keys of a giant organ. With head thrown back and ears cocked, the horse seemed both to hear and smell the open country; to smell the withered autumn grass, the grey prickles of flowers from which the petals have long dropped, the scent of herbage dying and leaves rotting; to hear hooves in a gallop on the wayside grass, the explosion of steel shoes on the loose stones of the road, the slow cessation with evening of the birds' calls, until the silence which preceded the hooting of the first owl, as it planes down the road to Aljerema only a few feet above the grass margin, and the squealing of the mice.

He put his hand on the horse's neck and tried to soothe its impatience with English words: "You shall have your gallop. Wait a little longer. Steady. Steady." He felt the quiver under his hand of fine nerves which recognised the unfamiliarity of the touch, and the movement emphasised the loneliness to which he was returning. Even the horse was accustomed to Spanish words and inflections and could not understand the alien tone, any more than he himself could understand the flow of language which met him at the Aljerema gate.

When he had ridden into San Juan two days before no one had stopped him. Now a man

in a grey-green uniform with a rifle slung across his shoulders stood in the road with upraised hands. Crane showed his papers, but the man gave them only a careless glance. They did not stop the flow of his speech. Crane shook his head and repeated whenever the soldier took breath "Aljerema." The man made a gesture to him to remain and went into an inn which leant one wall against the gate, the last house in San Juan. The horse whinnied impatiently while Crane tried to understand a number of advertisements that gave a medical reason for drinking every wine supplied. One was good for the digestion, another for uric acid complaints, a third for consumption. The soldier came out of the inn, followed by an officer, who adjusted his sword with one hand and wiped a grey moustache with the other. "Americano?" he enquired with his hand on Crane's rein, and before he could be corrected he claimed magnificently: "I can speak much American," and lapsing into pity for the man who stood respectfully behind him, "This poor man, no." Crane said: "I'm on my way to Aljerema. Why am I stopped?"

The officer raised deprecating hands. "Much danger, señor. That Caveda, he is all over the shop." "Isn't the road guarded?" Crane asked. "Ah, no, señor. The bridge is down. There are too much ambushes. We wait in San Juan for help."

"No one would interfere with me," Crane urged without conviction. The sun was slipping down towards the level of the roofs, and through the gate he could see the road to Aljerema, a straight olive

streak stretching to the horizon, between rocks and herbage and far-spread clumps of trees. The orange light of early evening touched the yellow leaves and transformed them into clusters of summer bloom. Even while he watched the bloom shifted, faded, climbed higher, and the brief season visibly passed. In a few hours that replica of summer would be gone, and evening would be the winter, with all its wind and cold. He thought of the inn at Aljerema with its great open fireplace and the stone floor that close to the flames scorched the feet. "I'm a foreigner," he said. "I've got nothing to do with your politics."

"You will be robbed," the officer protested. "I have nothing of value on me," Crane said. "Just enough money to reach Madrid, that is all. And a watch. Caveda's not a pickpocket, surely?" The officer turned, his sword clanking martially upon the stones, and spat on the cobbles. "He robbed a priest the other day," he said. "He had only a few pesetas. He will starve now until the Christmas offerings."

"Surely there'll be a collection?" Crane protested. "We have not much," the officer pointed out, easing his sword with a certain complaisance. "We have a wife, children, many children." He rubbed his moustache the wrong way and cocked an eye upwards, sharing a secret man to man, "And all the other things a man needs."

"Well, I'll be going," Crane said, and touched his horse with his heel. The bloom had reached the highest boughs, and the green dusty road lay cold as wet flags. It was less of the inn at Aljerema that he

thought now than of the inn he had left, Chase warming his hands before the blaze, Chase reading, Chase perhaps regretting the advice he had given. After all, was there any danger in staying compared with the danger of going? But the road was empty before him. There was no sign of life. For more than two miles it stretched, bare, exposed, safe. His horse at least desired to trust it, dancing on its toes.

"I have warned you, señor." Three hours will see me safe, he thought, while twenty-four hours will not do that for me if I stay. He gathered the reins and at the same moment heard the sound of hooves behind him. "Another foolish one?" the officer questioned, and Crane, turning in his saddle, watched the approaching rider. The street was long, the shadows confused his eyes, and it was not until she was within thirty yards of the gate that Crane recognised Eulelia Monti.

"A fine woman, señor," the officer said. "She often rides here in the evening. Wait, and let me introduce you. You may have her company for a mile. What is your American word—*cuté*, señor?" he questioned Crane, with no idea of the ridiculous inapplicability of the adjective.

Crane had a sense that she had recognised him from a great distance and had found time to compose both face and mind. She brought her horse to a halt a few yards from him and asked quietly: "Where do you go, Señor Crane?" The voice, a little hesitant over the words, but very certain of its own intention, had grown more familiar to him through the silence of the last hours. He had heard the arguments from

invisible lips, urging him to remain, and it did not seem strange that when words failed, she should appear herself across his road.

"Aljerema," he said, "and you?"

"I go for a ride often," she said, "along this road and back to San Juan. You go on to Madrid?" He nodded, watching with astonishment her calmness, her detachment from the last occasion of their speech. She said, "Go. I will give you five minutes' start." It was not, he began to feel, a complete detachment. This attitude of quiet, this acceptance of his presence, belonged to the peace which he had found so suddenly around him, the peace of which he could not name the beginning, but of which the end could now be easily foreseen, the moment when riding past her, he should cease to study the wise gravity of her face and be aware of her proximity. "Can't we ride a little way together?" he asked, and recognised at once, in a shaken head, her inalterable dislike of compromise. "No," she said. She drew her horse between him and the officer, and added in a lower voice: "It would not be safe for you to be seen with me." He could recognise the soundness of the reason, but he felt that it was a secondary one. In the firmness of her fingers as she touched his hand he could read all her disapproval of any wavering. "Good-bye!" One should stay or one should go. But he was not too impressed for argument. He had seen her weaken when she had admitted her sin with Caveda, had heard her protest, "Only once. For one night." That was compromise. He said, "I'll risk it," and was confirmed in his belief that danger had been the

secondary reason when she replied, "Is it worth while?"

And was it worth while? To add ten minutes of peace to that small deposit of treasure he had left behind him. Would not the contrast be only the more cruel? He questioned himself without any doubt of the outcome. He would protest up to the last moment. He would wipe his fingers upon Pilate's linen and show clean hands, but at the last it would not be his brain which would decide. He mocked himself: What you call fate is only your own weakness, your inability to resist the instant's good. Through the gate he saw the road to Aljerema like a river darkening as the sun withdrew, but it was a river that flowed to San Juan, and it seemed an almost impossible effort to beat for hours against that tide. There was danger in staying, but there was danger also in going. Easy now to close his eyes and helped by touch of hands to sink into peace, to decide no more, to struggle no more, but let death come. He pleaded: "For five minutes. There can be no danger so close to San Juan."

She struck her horse and passed him, riding with a certain lack of ease, a stiffness which seemed to mark her distrust of the horse. He overtook her twenty yards outside San Juan. He had no clear expectation of what her attitude would be, whether one of protest, of anger or a renewal of humility. She turned her face to him, its usual pallor lit by watered light that flowed across the road, the stubble and the rocks, and said, "I will race you to the first trees." He was amazed at her surrender to his company, a

surrender so simple that she seemed unconscious that it was a capitulation, a lowering of that uncompromising banner. She reached the trees first and had time to turn and watch him. He was unable to follow her moods and still belonged in spirit to the warning of danger and the question, "Is it worth while?" He rode with a sombreness and heaviness of spirit that affected his horse and left her laughing like Ariel ahead of him, reined in beside an almost leafless tree on a brown carpet of foliage.

"You ride better than I do," he said without amusement, as if he grudged her victory, with an envy for the way she rode the world, for her laughter and her lightness of heart.

She mocked him: "You were too bent on winning. You rode too seriously. Did you think that if I reached here first, you would lose me?" "I'm always afraid of that," he said, and only noted after he had spoken the incongruity of "always." He thought with pleasure at her quickness: I should have been safe with Chase, Chase would not have noticed; and felt an inclination to applaud her retort "Less than a day."

"A day wouldn't hold," he said, "what I had from you this morning." Her mood held out no longer against his own. Her whole body seemed to withdraw with the movement of one hand back along the rein. She said, "Pain. Is that it?" He shook his head. "A few hours held that," he said. "It had a beginning when you gave the letters to my friend to read, and it had an end."

"When?" she asked. He shook his head. "I don't

know . . . Two minutes ago. One minute ago. I only know it's gone. The other never began. I thought it had ended, but it was only that I left you." He had again the impression that she wished to escape to a region from which she could not hear him speak or be aware of his claims. She said with an incomprehensible despair: "Do you need it as badly as that?" His silence questioned her and forced her to explain. "I mean," she said, "to see me again, Ramon's mistress?"

He shook his head. "I have no right to blame you. You were never that. You are your own mistress." Her mood had already changed from mirth to a weariness of herself, or perhaps of the whole world that was full of desire, temptation, and the body's claims. "You are wrong," she said. "Your friend was right to blame me. It is a sin. A mortal sin." He protested that that meant nothing, that it was a form of words, a convenient dogma. They were dealing in spiritual things, and he was aware of his own vagueness, of being in two senses at sea in infinity. He admired, while he could not share, her tethered spirit, her beliefs which were almost tangible. "It means this," she said, "if I had died then, I should have been in danger of the flames for ever." The thought of so immaculate a justice angered him. "Then I have often run that danger," he said with a deliberate lightness. His objection did not move her. She took it carelessly. "You know no better. Mine was a sin because I know." Like a foolhardy commander she claimed the right of the most dangerous post.

After a moment she broke the silence she had created by her assurance. "You should ride on now to Aljerema." It was true. He knew it was true. Every motive of prudence supported her. He had delayed too long already. Summer had passed; winter had come with the fading light and a cold wind. The bloom had left the tops of trees and withdrawn to the horizon, where it glowed and shifted and flamed. The Aljerema road was first olive, then grey, and would soon be black, and all the plain in front began to vanish, in a blue mist like a sea of melted steel. It would be dark long before he reached the inn where he would stay.

He spoke his thoughts aloud: "And you go back to San Juan, to your home, to that room." Before he left the town he had prepared himself for losing her, but there had been no rehearsal to make him adept at this turning from the living body, the almost perceptible peace that her assurance offered. He thought with bitterness: Caveda had no need of her as I have. But he has possessed her, while I am seeing her now for the last time. For fifty years, if I live so long, I shall be without her. There could be for him no comforting thoughts of how one always forgot. One forgot the desire, one forgot perhaps the features, but in the fear, which was all life was to him, one could not forget the only genuine peace. From now on he must be content with imitations, the peace that came with sleep or with weariness. But he had no doubt that the moment of parting had come. His motives either way were selfish, the desire to stay or the desire to go, but the one was more dangerous, and the

danger was brought home to him now with the approach of night. He started as a grey leaf fell from the tree upon his saddle, the small sound reminding him of his vigil before the stone griffin and how every movement threatened to disclose his presence to the alert dark figure on the steps. Gathering his reins, he cried out his first reproach, "Why couldn't your faith have kept you from Caveda?" with the bitterness of unhappy leave-taking. He had not expected a reply from the face which grew every moment more shadowy, more wavering in the darkness. But before he had time to touch his horse into movement she began to reply, and her readiness to defend herself aroused his pity. It was an act of greater humility than her plea for forgiveness. She asked him: "What am I? I am my father and my mother. If I have any virtue, it is my father's. He is a good man." She spoke the weak adjective as if it were the supreme tribute. She implored him for agreement. "Is that not true? And if I have sinned, it is my mother's sin." "Why should you be damned for that, then?" Crane asked. He saw the ironic humour return to her mouth. "Why should I be saved because of my father's virtue?" But it was transitory. She beat her hand upon her saddle, exclaiming, "These are excuses. There should be something in me to resist my mother, when she whispers of the lovers I might have." Crane said incredulously, "She does that?" and blamed himself for the crudity of his perceptions when he heard her answer, "Not the mother you have seen, but the one in me. But where am I, who should resist? Is there an I?" Like the white underwing of

a bird her face shifted in the dusk, while she blasphemed against her own existence. For to Crane it was blasphemy. He could see in her nothing of the wavering old man with the candle, his mind dwelling with dead saints, nor of the thin woman with dyed hair and restless hungry lips.

"I have seen you," he said. She leant towards him and implored him with seriousness to tell her "When?" "When you rode by me just now," he said, "when you asked my pardon this morning; when you were being taught, so unnecessarily, English." The touch of humour in the last phrase sufficed to wake what he began to believe was her most personal characteristic—enjoyment. She said, with her lips twitching with amusement: "It is more necessary than you think. I do not know many words for things—do you understand me? I have read many books by Englishmen my father loves—Southwell, Campion. I know words like Good and Evil, Heaven and Hell, Eternity. I do not know what you call this tree, and this," she tapped the leather peak of her saddle. She said with frankness, "I understand more when you speak than when others speak to me. Do you remember last night how I could not understand when you said 'enemy, enemy'? I would know now. I can hear better. I know your tone of voice."

He said: "Would you understand if I said 'friend'?" She nodded: "Oh, yes. We are friends."

"If I said 'lover'?" He tried to peer through the thickening veils of dusk, but could gain no more than the impression of a white face receding. Her reply was, "You will be late at Aljerema. You should ride

quickly and reach the bridge while there is light. You will have to leave the road there. There is a ford where one man can cross fifty yards down-stream. It is marked by a pile of white stones."

"And you will go home?" "Yes, home," she repeated after him with a bitterness which made him question her. His question seemed to anger her by its obtuseness. She exclaimed, "How can I be happy with my mother? Every man who comes to the house she thinks wants me. She tells them about me, tries to rouse them, even your friend. They must have money, because we have none. Has your friend money? If he has, she will try to sell me to him. Was that not enough to make me cheat her and give myself away for nothing, even to Caveda?"

"You didn't love him?" It was less a question than a plea for reassurance. She said with a carelessness that tried to put a distance between the questioner and herself, "Oh, he is good-looking. He has——"

"Charm," Crane interrupted her with anger. "You've said it before. I can recite all your excuses. You were curious. Your mother had told you of the pleasure."

She laughed at him without mirth. "Yes, she cheated me there. We have cheated each other. At least I have not cheated you. I lied, but I told you that I lied. I admitted——"

"Your sin," he interrupted again. "Your mortal sin. Don't use any lighter term for it." "It is what I have called it all the time," she said. "I am glad

that at last we think the same." The sincerity of the last phrase drove bitterness out of the air; he felt their minds unite in the dusk, and he too was glad. He said "Good-bye" still sitting motionless upon his horse, making no effort to go. He said it thoughtfully, dividing the word in his mind into its component parts—"God be with you." If He is with her, he thought, will He also be with me, riding away from San Juan? She said in a strained voice, "I shall be sorry." The confession startled him. It even frightened him. He protested against it, as he might have protested against an honour which carried with it too tremendous a responsibility. "Why? Why should you be sorry?" He was aware, while he spoke, of the danger of the question, for he knew that he would receive from her the truth, the candid uncompromising truth. He feared that her answer, whatever it expressed of friendship or loneliness, would renew the tiring battle in his brain between going and staying, but he was not prepared for the words she used. "You have given me so much peace."

They silenced him, and in the dusk and quiet he felt that it would be easy to withdraw. There would be no protest, he was certain, from her mouth against his going. He could not understand how it was that he had brought her peace, but he could not doubt her truth. It appeared that both of them were to lose something they valued, but she was facing the loss with courage. Of course, he thought, she loses less than I. I love her, and the peace she gives me is far more rare than anything she gets from me. But a doubt remained whether he had heard all. He said

with some fear: "Is that everything?" and received the yet more unexpected answer in a tone of sad amusement, "We are two fools who love each other." He repeated her words with incredulity: "Love each other?" She ran her hand softly down her horse's neck, and the mare whinnied in reply. "Not as your friend does," she said. "Your friend who distrusts me. Not unselfishly, for no reason at all. But then you do not love me like that. So we are equal. Perhaps when we are old, you in London, I in San Juan, and we have forgotten how we looked, how we talked, how we moved, we shall love like that unselfishly, for no reason."

He had expected the battle to be renewed and was ready. One decision, he thought, and it will be over. "I'll stay," he said. She shook her head. "Dangerous," and the single word showed him clearly that the battle had only begun. It was like a light shining suddenly upon a city street, upon the bodies in gutters, the faces at windows, and on the slow manœuvring of living men who plan to renew the contest.

"I'll come back with you," he said and was aware of her incredulous gaze. "If Caveda's friends saw us——" "What does it matter?" he protested. "Only this," she said; "San Juan will be his to-morrow." The confirmation of his suspicions made him for a moment forget the personal issue. "How do you know?" She, it was clear, could not forget. Caveda was not an impersonal force to her; he was a man. His victory or defeat did not interest her except in so far as it affected their fortunes. "I've known his

plans for a long time," she said. "First the bridge. Then the shooting in the square. Then the funeral. Then the rising. Oh, it was worked out long ago. Only the man who was shot did not know. He was dead a month ago. Caveda did not trust him. I think he was wrong. Just as he was wrong to trust me."

"We can warn the Commandant. He has been warned, I expect, by now. Francis was to warn him."

"But what is the use? He can't get more men. It will only mean more fighting, more men killed, and the same thing in the end. It is better to let them alone." She added with earnestness, allying herself to that part of his brain which counselled flight and the avoidance of the nearest danger, "You will be safe beyond Aljerema." The battle was joined, but the first blow was struck in an unexpected quarter. He saw Chase with his forehead pressed for coolness against the glass of the window, counselling him, "Go. Please go," watching him ride away on the borrowed horse with a dry approving regret. He said, "There's Francis. If the rising is so certain, he must be told." She retaliated: "Do not trouble about him. I will tell him."

The resistance angered him. He had enough to resist, he thought, without her support to the cause of cowardice. He said abruptly, dogmatically, "I'll stay." He hoped that to give no reasons would disarm her opposition, and then there would be only his own brain and the gathering darkness to conquer, but he had not expected an instant capitulation, which was as terrifying as his own decision. She said

with incredulous joy: "You are right, of course you are right. And will you really be coming back with me to San Juan?" He nodded, not trusting his voice. "And you will stay with me, whatever happens?" She leant her face towards his as if she were about to entrust him with a secret. "I am a coward." He wondered whether deliberately she had chosen the lie which would most comfort him. The cunning of it, he thought with respect, was not beyond her powers. She knew him as no one knew him. And one day he would know her too. They would be like mirrors set in opposing walls that reflect each other's reflections. She had her way. He laughed, protested, and the shadows of his fears withdrew before the white light of her mirth. "Caveda. We've lived too much in the shadow of Caveda. We'll warn the Commandant. The man's not invincible."

"I thought that you had no side, that you were a foreigner." She did not know, he thought, into what foreign land he had come, stepping by night over the frozen Rubicon with his only friend left upon the further bank. The land had been strange to him at first; he had feared its light and its cold. Now he welcomed both, for the light showed him his companion and the cold brought them close. "My side is your side," he said, "and your side will never again be Caveda's."

She repeated the avowal with solemnity: "Never again." With the words she freed herself from the past and faced the future with joy. That joy was not her father's nor her mother's, it was her own; an individual, precarious joy, a dance upon ice so thin

that the dark current shone through the glass and shadowed the dancer's face. "Let us show how little we care for him," she said. "The light is nearly gone. His patrols will be out. Let us finish our ride before we go back to San Juan."

He could not share her joy. The best that he could do was to balance his heavier form upon the ice and watch with apprehension for the first cracks. "It's rash," he protested. Her hand was flung towards him through the dusk like a white gage, but the challenge was all in the gesture and not in the voice. The voice, he felt, recognised his fear, weighed his reasons and did not condemn. Still less did it agree. "Michael," she said, and the grief because he could not share her elation became deeper at the odd music she wrung out of his name, "this is a moment to be rash." She bent towards him, offering him comfort but not a change of purpose: "God will guard us."

He expressed his uneasiness in an incontrovertible statement: "He made Caveda too," and saw how it drove her to a more debatable, more personal statement: "He will guard us. We are good for each other." But how easily, with all that granted, he thought, were they separated. Nature could separate them, and that was blind chance. There was no purpose in the cold wind that rose and swept between and passed, leaving a trail of leaves that danced in the horses' faces and subsided. How much more easily then could Man, who was neither blind nor purposeless, sunder them. "I'm afraid," he said, and feared the next moment that he himself was the man chosen, for his cowardice could not but alienate her

courage, his caution her splendid rashness.

She swung her horse's head and brought her mount so close to his that he had only to lean a little from his saddle to have her breast against his arm. She put her hand on his and he was aware of the tremor of the nerves. "Of course you are afraid," she said. "So am I afraid. That is why we will do it." She laughed at him, mocked the shadow on his mind, his sense of responsibility. "It will be fun. Two cowards pulling—what is your phrase?—his ear." He tried with heavy steps to climb to her mood of laughter, but found the ledge insecure, the foothold treacherous, the fall too terrifying. She said, with laughter again, but laughter so low and natural and unconscious of itself that it seemed the abstract form of mirth, "For me. For my sake. You have never even told me that you love me."

He said in a passing reflection of her own light mood: "It seemed unnecessary." She protested: "You leave so much to me." It was evident that she considered the lightness of his reply a victory, which must be pressed home with mockery. "You are so superior. You keep so silent, taking our love, my love, your friend's love. We do not get much in return for it. What are you doing all the time?"

"Questioning it," he said. "Wondering how long it will last."

"And your own love?" she asked. "Questioning that too," he said. "Whether I love anyone at all but myself. Whether I'd do anything for anyone to the injury of myself. Whether I love you or the peace from the world I think I can get from you. Do I

know you enough to love you yourself? If you should lie to me, I ought to love your lies. If you have a deformity of body, I ought to know it and love it. If you have a hidden foulness, I ought to love that too. Otherwise what do I love? not you, but my idea of you."

"What a fuss about nothing," she said. "Do you think that I love an idea? Why should I have troubled my head so much? No, it is you I love. Leave ideas to poets. We are ordinary people." He said with a candour that made her smile, "I wish I were."

She began to persuade him gently, while he listened hungry to be convinced of his own commonness: "You are. You are. All this talk about fear. Most of us are afraid of life. Your fears are ordinary fears, but you think of them too much."

He shook his head: "I can foresee." "We can all foresee," she argued with him, "we are all condemned to pain, sickness, terrors and death. It is not foresight. It is common sense." She played on the word with mockery. "You see. Even your sense is common." She implored him still with an undercurrent of mirth: "Only give me time, and I will persuade you to be happy."

"If only we are given that," he brooded and with a flash of longing, "so little is necessary. Only enough to be close to you, to see nothing but you, feel nothing but you, and think of nothing else. This morning when my hand was on your breast might have been eternity."

"But when we get back to San Juan, we separate,"

she said. "So ride a little way first." That argument convinced him, but it was a fallacious one. They touched their horses and rode on slowly side by side to savour the minutes which could not be savoured because all the way the ghost of Caveda rode between. The patter of leaves falling was the sound of spirit hooves. They were silent, passing into the growing dusk, and were united now only by their common cowardice. The ride became to both of them a sorry defiance which came to an abrupt end with the rising of a figure that had lain stretched in the low dry herbage by the road. He stumbled forward through the crackling of the leaves and the stones of the road rang under the steel nails of his boots. He wore no uniform; he might have been a herd who had left his goats to browse and urinate in the wilderness, except for an air of authority which shone through the ragged clothes, transcended the stubbly beard and the small shifting eyes. So might Sancho Panza have looked, raised to the Governorship of the imaginary island. Both Crane and Eulelia Monti knew that the moment had come when their gesture of defiance was to be tested. If they weakened now it became valueless. There was time, Crane's reason counselled him, to turn their horses and ride home. He checked his horse and put out a hand towards his companion's rein. It was not that he had decided on the weaker course, it was only that he sought time to argue with himself the pros and cons of advancing or turning back. But the decision was taken from him. His hand outstretched touched only the rump of Eulelia Monti's horse as it trotted past. He followed to

where she had drawn up nearer the waiting man, who peered at them through the gathering night.

"Let's go back," he said. "We've ridden far enough. There's no sense in risking too much." He made, for him, the amazing claim: "Life is too precious." He was near enough now to see her face clearly, and he despaired. No serious argument that he might raise would influence her when she was possessed by her obscure mirth. He doubted whether she could even hear him. Fear was forgotten in her supreme enjoyment, which was too intense for laughter. She said softly: "I know him. I know him. He was a herd before he joined Caveda. Now he hopes for a commission in the army."

"Come away," Crane said, "before he recognises you." She turned to him eyes brilliant with excitement. "Go to him," she said, "and tell him that you are riding with your wife and ask him how far it is back to San Juan. I will stay here." He thought that she was planning an evasion and approved. Afterwards he blamed himself for not reading her purpose in her excited mirthful eyes. He said: "I can't. I don't know enough Spanish." She recited the words to him and made him repeat them twice, while the former herd watched them with dull suspicious authority. Crane approached him and spoke the formula. It sounded less convincing with each repetition, but it never occurred to him that the words were not meant to convince.

The man answered him curtly and continued in a kind of armed occupation of the road, waiting for them to return towards San Juan. That was what

Crane was anxious to do. He wheeled his horse and came almost into collision with Eulelia Monti's mare. She had ridden up behind him while he spoke to Caveda's recruit and now, leaning forward across her horse's neck, she deliberately presented the man with her identity. His mouth fell open in a gape of astonishment followed by a vomit of words. She nodded at him friendly-wise and turned her horse towards San Juan. He tried to follow, but Crane reined in between, and he fell back, all his authority vanishing into the dusky air through his astonished mouth.

"Why did you do it?" Crane asked her and resented her laugh. But he could not avoid noticing that anger had taken the place of fear. Though only one red streamer blew along the western sky and the road was far darker than when they had begun their ride, the leaves that fell were only leaves and not stealthy movements in the herbage and among the rocks. I suppose that I should be grateful for that, he thought, and became the more angry. "You had no right to take the risk."

She paid him not the slightest attention, riding triumphantly, with lips pressed together in a smile. He said, more conciliatingly: "We belong to each other now. You had no business to risk our happiness like that." She moved her hand in a semi-circular arc before her. "I have risked nothing at all. This is our happiness."

He repeated "this" after her with distaste, meaning to indicate the stony road, the night sky, the danger behind, and the danger in front; and all uncomfortable thoughts, of Chase deserted, of Caveda's

inn. "Yes, this," she said, with the same movement of her hand. "The dark, riding together with no one to come between us, the chance——" He could at least follow that line of thought and supplied the missing words "of death," then let his free hand drum out his fear upon the saddle. She said in a low voice, which filled him with an envious despair for its certainty, "What is death?" She spoke with triumph and did not require a reply. But he gave one: "Perhaps eternity." They spoke, he knew, at cross-purposes, for eternity still meant for him the sandalled feet and the sad singing, the canopy and the chasuble, the menace of the gold monstrance and the sacrificed God. She agreed with him: "Yes, eternity." It was strange to him that she welcomed the thought, even after she had endangered her own ecstatic enjoyment by coming close enough to earth and the moment of time to reason, to explain. She said: "You said that I gave you peace. There will be peace without end, conscious peace." He said with apprehension: "I don't want anything strange, unfamiliar. Your peace was good enough for me." Through the dusk he became aware of the darker shadows where San Juan lay. The houses waited for them like giant warders. They had been let out on parole to enjoy an hour's freedom in the countryside and now were at the prison gates. The old order of life was to be renewed, but with a difference, Crane told himself. They had gone out separately and returned together.

He said, "I'll see you to your home," and saw pleasure, ecstasy, mirth fade from her face. The words had set a limit to their enjoyment. They were

nearly at the gates now, and only the length of the Aljerema street and a turning and a stretch of cobbles divided them from Señor Monti's house. Two or three minutes, that was all, and he became suddenly aware that, while they had talked as lovers and assumed with ease that new relationship, they had never acted as lovers. A touch of the hand, their horses moving in rhythm were the limit of their embrace. He was again amazed at her understanding when she said, "Listen. We will not go straight home. I must talk to you a little longer." The walls of the gate rose beside them, the shadows fell and wrapped them in secrecy. He made a suggestion: "The public gardens."

"They are closed at this hour."

He said doubtfully: "My inn," seeing very clearly the objections. She ignored the obvious one and produced immediately what would chiefly have worried him. "Your friend."

"Aren't there any quiet streets?" he asked despairingly. Her hand pointing was sufficient answer. The Aljerema street, narrow, badly lit, would ordinarily have been deserted enough for their purpose. Now from end to end it was patrolled. Dejected, apprehensive men rode up and down on horses that reflected in their doubtful stride their owners' fears, weariness, indifference to the rights and wrongs of the war they fought.

"Some church?" She nodded doubtfully. Yes, there was a church near her home, but she was known there. He protested at the implication that his company would bring her into discredit. She had not

been slow to reveal herself to Caveda's patrol; but she hesitated at the thought of being seen by a priest. All the time he talked he led the way and let the long street unwind behind them like a thread which would show them, when required, the way of return, to the Aljerema gate and the road to Madrid. She said: "It is different. I do not want to use a church to meet a lover in. It will bring bad luck." He laughed: "If I believed in luck," and told her of the broken mirror and Chase's nervous outbreak. "No, it is because I am what you call a heretic," he accused her.

"Yes," she said "you are a heretic." She watched him seriously. "But have I not tried to send you away? I did my best. You would not go." She stretched the truth to give him the credit for his return. He heard the cobbles ring under the horses' hooves and drew rein. Twenty yards away a light shone on a stone griffin and a bouquet of foliage. "Here's your home," he said. "Must we say good-bye?" She repeated the word with amazement: "Home," and revealed how blind she had been to their passage from the Aljerema gate. He said angrily: "Good-bye" and a moment later upbraided himself for his irritation, his deliberate misunderstanding, his want of candour. Her truth shamed him when she said without any pretence at lightness or flippancy: "No, no. This is not my home. My home is with you." He wished to accept her words, to repeat them, to take her hands and offer all his service. Instead he did not so much as meet her eyes, but said with an angry mockery: "Here. In this street. In the cold." He had the sense that she was driving him back upon his final de-

fences. He had built up so many barricades of cowardice, fears, evasions, that he had thought the citadel impregnable. The citadel, he supposed, was truth, sincerity, self-knowledge. Now his defences crumbled before the very simplicity of her assault. He had been prepared for any degree of guile or of the treachery of friends, but he had not been ready for a woman who came like St. Joan, where the wall was thickest, to touch it with the tip of her banner. "There are more comfortable homes." She shook her head: "This is all I want."

Furtively he turned his eyes towards her, and when he saw her face, in the illumination of a street lamp and a lit window, capitulated. The walls had crumbled, the citadel was taken, and in a sudden exhilaration he, the vanquished, joined in the triumphant cry of the conquerors: "I love you. How I love you!" He said: "I don't want to speak any more, but is there nowhere where we can be together as we were this morning? The church. Only for two minutes." His surrender, he was aware, called for another surrender and he knew that she would not be slow to recognise the claim. She said, "We can tie the horses here," and was on the ground while he still marvelled at her quickness of perception and her generosity. He dismounted more slowly and they knotted the horses' reins to a brass ring in a wall. Then he followed her treading softly down the street. They passed her home and a few yards further one soldier, leaning against a wall in an attitude of weariness, rolling a cigarette. They trod by him on their toes, and he did not even raise his eyes from his yellow

nails and thin skilful fingers. A cat leapt from a balcony almost to their feet with hunched back and unsheathed claws, then padded before them, her animal quiet mocking their clumsy human caution. On the part of Eulelia Monti the caution faded a little more at every step. Already her doubts, and even her love, were giving place to that deeper characteristic, enjoyment. She looked back at Crane and exclaimed: "If my mother could see us now. Your face so serious. And I——" He never knew what humorous quality she had found in herself, for they had reached the church door.

They entered it, as they might have entered the forest of a fairy tale, hand in hand; groped their way up a dark clearing which was the aisle, feeling at every five steps the great cold trunk of a pillar that soared towards an unseen roof and afterwards curved towards them, dropping shadowy foliage. There was the sound of a voice muttering in a corner, and a suspended light, like a star seen between the forest leaves, revealed to Crane the presence of his fear. God was upon the altar. He was again in the Presence from which he had fled down the Madrid street back into the sunlight, but with the sound still in his ears of the shuffle and the singing. It was easy there in the dark, where time did not enter, and the only human voice seemed burdened already with the horror of eternal life, to believe in a living God that men might eat like bread and a soul that could be condemned to consciousness for ever. His fingers closed the tighter on the other's hand and he said with despair: "We are not even alone here."

She misunderstood his meaning for almost the first time that day. "It is only a peasant in the confessional." He shook his head and pointed at the light and the dim white shape of the altar like a bed of lilies in a hollow of the wood. "I meant——" She said with exultation: "He is everywhere," but he knew in spite of her words that if He existed at all, He existed in that Church as He did not exist in the sun, in a theatre, in a crowd, at games, at an inn. He was said to be all-good, but in the sun that bred decay and made flesh rot, in any place where men were gathered for differing motives, He was qualified by evil. Here in the dark, in a building dedicated to His service, behind the lamp and in His golden shrine, He was untouched by the sins of His creation, He was safe; safe as long as He lay in His one unthreatened kingdom, a circle of gold, a few inches round, in a man-made monstrance. If there is a God, he thought, if that wafer is flesh and blood, enduring at every communion the actual pain of Calvary, the torture of the nails and the torment of the thief's mockery, a thousand years foreshortened into this moment, may one be allowed to pity God? He had come into the church to kiss and touch and hold, and now all he felt was the inclination to pray, to beseech God on his knees to put an end to His eternal torment, to cease to overwhelm man with such an enormous debt. I have suffered pain, he thought, at Eulelia's words, and she recognised the debt. I have given Chase pain and I must repay him. But how can any man repay God? We want to be given, not to give, to be given wealth which means peace undis-

turbed by toil; we want safety, which means a peace from fear; we want human love, which means a peace from ourselves; we want death, and He offers us life eternal. It is the mockery of the first thief, the voice of God in the felon's body. Must we repay Him first before we can expect the peace we ask from Him?

Something shifted upon the altar, something that shook the lilies of the forest with its passage, a hidden wind, a spirit passing. He could believe in that dim solitary spot, in his ears constantly the mutter of a fearful belief, that God Himself had stirred, had moved from His safe golden enclosure, was risking sacrilege again for the sake of humanity. The hand which still held Eulelia Monti to his side trembled.

"What is it?" she asked in a whisper attuned to the mystery. She mocked him without breaking it, without blaspheming the place or the moment. "What is it you fear now?" His silence could not disguise it from her. "The cat," she said, "the church cat," and he saw now its feline stretch upon the altar, its unconcerned spring towards the chancel rail. The exaggeration of his fear had its reaction in a kind of blessed and holy peace. He did not wish to laugh but to smile and pray smiling. It was as though the Christ Himself had driven away fear, turbulence, complainings with a jest at His own expense. He watched the cat circle the pillar, its back curve with suspicion as it saw the man and woman. He knelt and putting out a hand blindly made certain of the woman's presence. "I too would like to confess," he said, "but to you." She said with a quiet amusement that he felt would always fall like rain upon parched soil, like

sunlight on a dripping hedge, like the moon on darkness bringing peace: "You would be shriven too easily."

He said, "Come here," and before the cold stones on which he knelt could strike their chill upwards to the heart, he made a foolish parody of a crossing. "I confess to thee, Eulelia Monti." He paused, aware that he might have given pain by his performance. "Is that blasphemy?" She shook her head: "We love each other. Nothing we do, loving each other, can be blasphemy. If we ever began to hate, that would be different. If I were to bear you a child, which made me ugly, and you hated me, that would be blasphemy, as if you hated the Mother of God. If you will give me pain one day, and I hate you, it shall be as if I hated God because my father is sick, because I suffer in my head, because one of us will die and one be left alone." She knelt at his side, as if to show how nothing he could do would harm her beliefs, and imitated his action. Crossing herself she said, "I confess to thee, Michael Crane." The thought of Caveda and the inn room did not mar their solemn enjoyment. "I confess to you," he began again, "cowardice, lust, poverty." They laughed. The words were ciphers, meaning nothing to minds uninstructed by the lore belonging outside the dark forest in which they knelt. "Unfaithfulness." "To whom?" "Haven't I known you since last night? What was my attempt to leave San Juan but unfaithfulness to you?"

The muttering in a corner ceased, and a priest passed in front of them between the pillars. As he

turned, after making his obeisance at the altar, he saw them and approached. His face was a peasant's face with a difference, and his body had the apparent strength and large limbs of a peasant, but without the natural dignity of a man accustomed to deal with horses, cattle, a lower creation. He had been humbled by a different traffic. His face, coarse, lined, battered by extremes of weather, disguised his age. Forty, fifty, sixty years, it was impossible to tell. He was a man of strength and one would have said without mercy, but when he spoke that impression faded. Like Quixote he had been saddened by a constant unequal warfare, he had been, perhaps, tormented by his dreams, but like Sancho he had not lost his humour, a certain stupidity, good nature. So now he blundered, thinking them in the dark, the single light shining on his own face and not on theirs, a pair of affianced peasants. Crane thought he could guess from his attitude some pity for illusions to be broken, some humour for ignorance to be dispelled and, lurking at the corners of the mouth longing to be put into unpriestly words, a Rabelaisian raillery on the subject of the pleasures to come and the pains of childbirth.

He said something to Eulelia Monti and she replied with enjoyment. He came closer, exclaimed "Señorita Monti" in astonishment, and gazed at them with an inquiry that demanded an answer. Crane said suddenly, almost unaware of the words forming: "Why shouldn't he marry us?" and waited to defend his suggestion. But it never required defence against anything that Eulelia Monti might say. She may

have accepted it as part of the magic of the place, as a logical illogicality; or the thought may have come from her mind to his own. She spoke to the priest, and it was against the priest's stubbornness that he fought with reasons that neither the woman, nor the place, nor the watching God upon the altar demanded. "Tell him," he said, "that it is urgent, that we cannot wait, that to-morrow anything may happen." She translated his words and he saw the priest shrug at the last phrase, which was to him no more than a truism. It was his duty to preach each day to men that they knew not at what hour the Bridegroom might come, that God was like a thief in the night, that the lamps must be kept trimmed; now, like any other man, he refused to believe that the next day would be different from the one before.

"He cannot understand that it is urgent," she said. "If only I could tell him—" he was aware of her smile through the dusk—"that I was going to have a baby. He is suspicious. He does not understand."

"We are both old enough to know our minds. Is it that I am not a Catholic? Tell him I will become that or anything. I believe now, in this moment. Isn't that enough? If I lose you, I lose faith. I can believe in mystery with you here, in God upon the altar, in God upon the tongue. Let him marry us while I believe. To-morrow there will be a whole night between us, eight hours of dark between God and myself." "That won't persuade him," she said, and he felt impatience at the mockery in her voice. At least I make suggestions, he thought, while all she does is stand apart and hold them up, to examine

their tears and laugh at the threadbareness. He said, "Why shouldn't your mother consent?" "Haven't you confessed to me," she asked with irritating amusement, how poor you are? Your friend, she thinks, is rich. He works for a great paper. Oh, she has hopes of him, you may be sure. She is spinning, now, at this moment." She said of Chase as she had said of Caveda. "He has charm. He is good-looking."

"Tell him your age. What is it?" He had thought her thirty at the least and was amazed to learn that she was twenty-six. "And I am thirty-three." He said more to the priest than to her, "He must marry us." The idea had come to him with the suddenness of an inspiration, of a warning—Now or never at all. He began to attribute it to foresight and was afraid to relinquish it. He saw the priest watching him, the hard face wrinkled with the desire to understand, and turned away in despair. He heard Eulelia Monti speaking again, and was conscious of the low reply. How can he hope, Crane thought, to receive any answer to prayer, when he is himself impervious to human desires, hopes, fears? If God is so inflexible, what use is there in images, in carved columns, gold vessels, music and vestments to bribe His eye and ear? God is hunting, God is sleeping, God is feeding. While we tend the altar lamp and pray, trim the candle wicks, sweep the aisle, garnish the empty house with palms at Easter, fruit at harvest, berries in December, God is dreaming, God is fishing, God is gaming; and like a spark from the lamp burning its sharp way to his brain, he thought, And I am dying. A truism, the

priest would say, accustomed every day to attend the death-bed of an old or a young man, to prepare every night for his own end, all men must die. But I am not "all men." There is no other man like me, with the same thoughts, the same fears, desires, satisfactions, and to me there is no question of this year, next year, sometime. I am dying, I know that I am dying. If God is a thief in the night, He has allowed me to hear His fumble at the latch. He held out his hands, "Marry us," in a direct appeal which needed no translation.

He received an unexpected support. All three bodies straightened at a clap of sound that set the chancel lamp swinging. The priest clapped a hand to his side and said, "¿Quien es?" swaying towards them. His face was twisted in an attempt to retain a priestly impassivity and not to disclose the ordinary fearing man. He had stood a little apart, the representative of God, resisting two persons' importunities. Now he was one of them. He had joined them in their fear and was a man. If any of the three had a quality more than human, it was Eulelia Monti, who pronounced with an indifference that may have been forced, "Caveda." Then they all stood listening for the shot to be repeated, and when it came again, twice in rapid succession, so close that Crane expected to see a pillar splinter, an image fall, or the Christ above the altar to lose its ruined limbs, he alone had not his body in control. With hand pressed to his mouth he saw the woman and the priest start side by side for the street door and could not move to join them. At first he could not even cry out, so suddenly had the truth of

his fears, the truth of his death been brought to him. Those shots were fired at him, the fusillade had only begun. No matter what it had struck, doorway, passer-by, soldier, politician, rebel, window-pane—he claimed the bullet for his own, almost with pride accrediting his foresight, as a boy who shows off a card trick to doubting friends. Look. It is true. I am dying. Only there was something wrong. I should not be standing here, he thought, I should be running. When I die I shall not see at the last Christ crucified, a pillar, a lamp, a shrine of gold. The priest and the woman had reached the door, while he stood in his fear and wondered: What should I see? and received the answer with the usual certainty: a few strange faces, a carven animal, a gold coin and a pool of muddy water. He woke from his half-dream and called to her: "Eulelia. Eulelia. Don't go into the street." When he saw her hand on the iron ring, he ran towards them, stumbling into a pillar as he went. "Don't show yourself. Let me go." They were the bravest words he had yet spoken, for he recognised the carven animal and believed that he would find death in the street. He caught her arm and flung her towards the priest. "Hold her." Then the door was open and his skin flinched with the fear of pain.

But there was no pain, only a flow of moonlight like honey over the cobbles, turning the water in the drains to wine, so that a second miracle of Cana seemed performed for his wedding. He would have believed that the shots had been fired only in his brain, a warning and a foretelling, if there had not

been visible proof of their reality in the priest's care and Eulelia Monti's curiosity. The sound had gone like thunder and left no trace. He said with incredulity, still waiting for the shot to break the bones of his chest, "Everything seems quiet." His eyes raked the street, cobbles, moonlight, balconies, carvings, the honeyed pools in drains, shadows from house to house that lay like velvet carpets stretched for a reception or a dance, or like deep felt to deaden sound outside the dwelling of a dying man. They took in too many things in a world grown suddenly precious, in a street where he was determined his wedding should be solemnised. The priest went straight to the deep shadow of the church's buttress and found where at least one of the bullets had struck. He went into the shadow as into a cave and emerged supporting an old woman, whose hand was wrapped in her shawl. In the church he sat her upon the ground with her back to a pillar and bound her bleeding palm with strips from his cassock. He questioned her and Eulelia Monti translated her answers. "She says that the soldiers were nervous and began firing their rifles into corners."

"What was she doing there?" Crane asked with reluctant amusement, relieved that his fears for once had proved untrue, ashamed that he had shown them. The old woman, the shock over, seemed overjoyed at finding herself the centre of attention. She moved her head up and down as she spoke, swinging withered dewlaps. "She was spying on her son. He is courting. She might almost be my mother," Eulelia Monti said with amusement.

"I don't understand. Why did they get nervous? There must have been a reason." "Oh, yes, there was a reason," she said with sombreness. "They found a body in the street." "Was it somebody you knew?"

"One knows everyone by name," she said, "in a little place like this. He drove the mail cart between here and Aljerema." It was not unexpected news. Crane had been unable to share San Juan's indifference to the scream that had come to them across the market place like a last appeal to the men he had insulted to help him, to turn the other cheek, to act as Christians. "He was better dead," Crane said, with fear again drumming in his head, the sound of shots recreating themselves from silence in his brain to tear the flesh. "No, not that," she said. "Better alive. Better in prison, hungry, blind. Better than dead." Her words were like a betrayal. She had promised him peace from one fear at least, if only he would believe. "Where's your faith?" he implored and accused her. "Is life better than death?"

He recognised with joy her understanding as she came from the priest's side to his own, and her hand on his was a blessing. "Not for us," she said, "not for us. Death for us will be lovely. Death will be our bodies joined. Death will be a light to see each other by. But he was an atheist. A man of sin. And he will be suffering now. But when he was alive his sins were beautiful to him. He was proud because he did not believe, thinking to be different from other men. Now he will be different from the happy dead. Perhaps he is altogether dead. That may be God's

mercy. When others live, he dies for ever."

"But in such terror," Crane protested, "not to have one moment to know peace. To die on a scream." He led her back to the dark group by the pillar. "You must make him marry us. I want to believe. I can believe with you beside me." She spoke to the priest and turned back to him with a despairing gesture: "There must be witnesses." It was in some degree, Crane recognised, a victory. The priest had taken refuge in a technicality: a band of nervous soldiery had done that much for them. Eulelia Monti considered with a hand to her mouth. "Here is one," she said with her eyes on the old woman who continually raised to the priest in gesticulation a hand roughly bound and resembling a blackened stump. "Where shall be the other? Wait," Eulelia said, and before he could question her was gone from the church into the street, leaving him in that dark wood which they had entered for its solitude, but which now was crowded to his clearing eyes with life or effigies of life, a priest brooding on the death of a sinner, the Virgin disclosing to the insentient dark her pierced heart, the Son of God hanging in torture from the Cross, paying in agony His mother's grief, who paid in turn with hers, a circle of endless torment. For whose sake? Crane asked. For mine? And he thought of his fears and his lusts and asked whether he even wished to believe. If I should believe, he wondered, what difference would it make to me? My body would have the same desires, my mind the same fears, life would be the same. The retort came as swiftly in his brain as if it had been spoken

by Eulelia Monti, who had always shown herself quick, he thought, to check any false reasoning: Your death would be different. It would not be purposeless. You would pay back to-morrow, if you should die with pain and with faith, the sacrifice of your God. The debt again would be His, who pays eternally. You would join the endless circle of God and the Mother of God, and for the moment he saw it with the outer eye, a visible ring of white light roaring through the darkness of the church, first as small as a wedding ring, its orbit growing like the circle of a stone in a pool, enclosing the altar, enclosing the pillars, enclosing the priest, brushing his own face with the wind of its movement, dazzling his eyes with its light. It will encircle me, he thought, and trembled at the prospect of pain, but as it receded and he could see again with the fading of its light, he feared to lose it and thrust his hands outward to place them within the white circumference. His wrists burned as if at the touch of a flame, and for a moment he saw his hands within the circle, light dropping from the fingers like blood, and he felt pity for his own wounds, as he might have felt for another's. Poor hands, he thought, and grieved over them, and as the light left them, held the fingers towards the altar, believing that they still suffered, and it was only with the awareness of their insentient stiff mortality that the strange peace was broken.

The physical pain had left his hands and the mental pain of rejection returned. Why should I be left, he thought with bitterness, and the priest be taken? refusing consciously to recognise in that hard

and battered face the life of care, caution, dubiety that must have harried him all his days with the questions: Am I doing all that I can do to save my people? is my advice the best? do I watch them too closely? He belonged to a vocation that could never know either success or failure, and now, blind to the ring of light that had given his companion an ecstasy of hope and pain, he bent over the old woman, all his faculties absorbed in the necessity of understanding the proportions, however meagre, of good and evil in that withered and garrulous hag, of sympathising, advising, if possible amending. If Eulelia had been here, Crane wondered, would she have been aware of what I saw, would she have been accepted? But he had no real doubt of the answer. She would have been taken and he would have been left. The light would have come between them. For a moment he longed to be the possessor of some mediæval incantation that would kill the soul, until he saw the door open and in the darkness the shadowy outline of her face. The expression was hidden from him, but in the features he thought that he could read love, tenderness and the power to draw him to her, wherever she might go, into whatever radiance. "Where have you been?" he asked her, and would have added, if she had not been companioned, "out of the world?" for the world might have been this dark building fashioned for worship and holding, symbolised in the old woman's wounded hand, war and fear, and in his own heart desire, hope, despair.

She said, "I have been home. I have brought my father. He will witness our wedding." The tall old

man stepped forward and seemed at once a part of his surroundings in a way the priest was not. The priest was a servant in the house, but Señor Monti might have been the image of the saint in whose name the house was built or, thin and bent, the alabaster effigy of a knight who had fought the Moors in Granada. He bowed to the priest and to Crane and in cautious soft English expressed his pleasure at the honour done to his family. Crane protested: "The honour is mine," suspecting a touch of irony and received as sharp a retort as the old man was capable of inflicting: "Anyone whom my daughter chooses must be an honour to my family." Lowering his voice he said that he understood the need of haste. These were terrible days, when God's knocking was constantly heard. It was natural for young people to try to seize a little happiness. Besides, he added, with an oblique reference to his wife, there were influences at work round his daughter of which he could not approve. If not evil, they were at least misguided. Money was a little thing. He said with sudden sharpness, "Passion, too. Do not, I beseech you, depend on that."

Crane was silent. This was not a man to whom he could speak on level terms. He belonged as his daughter belonged to that lit circle which excluded him, but he could not, like his daughter, speak in terms of the banished world. He watched Eulelia Monti and understood a little of what her father intended. Then in low voices, as if conspirators against the larger world, they gathered at the altar, the representatives of the smaller, quieter land. He could not understand

the Latin that the priest spoke with his Spanish intonation, but he slipped the signet ring from his finger at a sign. "Have you gold and silver?" Eulelia Monti asked, and he felt in his pocket and found a ten-peseta piece. "And gold?" He shook his head, and then remembered that in a pocket he still retained an English sovereign. He held it out, and as the altar candles lit it between his fingers, remembered the vision which had followed the firing of the shots, of the carven animal, the muddy pool, and the gold coin fallen to the ground. The priest took it with the ring and returned them to him again to give to the woman he was marrying. His motions were dictated, the words were dictated, the Spanish words coming awkwardly from his mouth, their meaning lost, as features were lost in the obscurity of the great church. No one, he thought, has ever married more blindly, no one with a more certain will. He put the coins in her hand and saw her fingers close on them, caress them gently as if their metal were a part of him. His eyes were on hers, and hers upon the altar and on the God who saw them take each other for the rest of life. He knows, Crane thought, how long: a year, a month, a week, a day. He prayed with closed lips, hoping that his thoughts would travel through the murmur of the Latin: Let it be long enough. Long enough, he meant, to strengthen me with happiness.

The little group fell apart, the marriage over. Now as husband and wife they were further separated than they had ever been. The priest and her father stood between them and spoke in low voices. He heard the

words San Juan on the old man's lips and guessed them to be not the name of the town with its stirring of sensual life, but of the saint who died in the desert. They had dismissed the two of them to life, and life in the form of the old woman grabbed greedily at the newcomer, overwhelming Eulelia with questions, congratulations, little pieces of intimate enjoyable advice.

"Come away," Crane said. "I'll see you home. To-morrow——" He did not finish his sentence, sceptical of the future. She called to him over the old woman's head. "No. Stay here. My father will take me home." "What can I do here?" he protested and received for reply the simple statement: "Pray for us both." It drove him to an attitude quite alien to his nature. He had never believed much in the value of practical actions, but he became their defender now. "I haven't time for prayer. There is too much to arrange. I must see that we have horses ready for us to-morrow morning. The earlier we are away the better."

"Your friend——"

"I shall have warned him. I can't do more." For the first time in mind and speech he made a clear statement of values. "You are more important." He went on: "You'll want to sleep at home to-night. I had better see your mother now. There's no good in disguise." She pushed the old woman on one side with petulance. "No. Let me think." It was a desperate appeal for silence, in which time could at least appear to halt. Things had gone too fast, the hand she pressed to her forehead seemed to indicate.

She who had been Eulelia Monti had become the wife of a man she had not known twenty-four hours ago. "It is fantastic," she said aloud, trusting in what she believed to be a man's invariable incomprehension. Then perhaps she remembered that they were too close to each other for their thoughts to be safely hidden. "Oh, it will be well to-morrow, very well. We shall go together as early as you wish. We will be happy. But to-night my mother will not know." She appealed to him, "The lie will be mine." It was as though Truth itself stooped to deceit for his sake. "It will be safer. She might do anything. Caveda——" He bowed before the power of the name. It seemed incredible to him still that he could so easily escape. He made only one condition: "I must tell Francis." She agreed with him: "Yes. You must tell Francis. We owe him something. I owe my mother nothing."

They had neither of them any desire to embrace. That belonged to happiness, the future, daylight. While they were still in the shadows and the world threatened their security, a touch of the hands was sufficient. Before she left him she gave him back the gold piece. "It is what people do," she said. "You keep the gold, I the silver. I have read romances where lovers cut a coin in half." She closed his hand with passion on the coin. "To-morrow," she said, "to-morrow. There must be a to-morrow." She implored him, "Pray," but he had more faith in her prayers and he did not stay five minutes in the church when she was gone.

The streets were not so empty when he passed through them to the inn. There was much chatter

from balconies, calling out of windows, low voices in doorways. The dark had completely fallen and between the sparse lights the faces from which the voices came were invisible. After the temporary silence caused by the soldiers' shots, the hive had woken to discuss, explain, argue, forecast. But the words to him were meaningless. He had the impression of riding in an avenue, where sounds took the place of trees. The act of moving, he knew, made him visible. His patch of solitary silent darkness shifting from wall to wall aroused curiosity. A dog would sniff at the horse's heels, occasionally a man, standing with another in a doorway, would strike a match to light a cigar, but holding it at arm's length examine his face in the instant of his passing. He wondered: Is Caveda in San Juan to-night, making his final preparations? He has had one man murdered because he spoke too much. It would be very easy to have me shadowed and killed at some dark turning. He began to imagine footsteps following him softly, feet running on either side of the road. Reining his horse to a standstill he listened. He needed silence. Through the voices calling, the rise and fall of talk, the barking of dogs, it was impossible to pick out any cautious movement of feet. If I am attacked, he thought, I can do nothing. I am unarmed.

With relief he saw at last the lights of the market place. A platoon of soldiers marched by him, rifles slung at ease, coming out of the light square and vanishing into the dark from which he had come. The darkness extinguished them rank by rank. They ceased to live as men and became a sound only, and

that rapidly dwindled. He had noticed a few of their faces as they peered towards him, young badly-shaved men, obvious conscripts. They looked nerve-ridden, aware of the hostility which surrounded them in a region that was all but foreign, where a dialect was spoken they understood with difficulty, where shots came out of the dark, where their enemies fought without uniform in a disguise of anonymity. For all they know, he thought with sympathy, I might be Caveda. He was almost in the safety of the square when a voice addressed him: "Señor," and when he would have ridden by, paying no heed: "Señor Crane." His own name brought him to a halt. He said with suspicion: "Who is that?" and heard a soft shuffle of feet along the cobbles behind him. He rode a few yards further on to where a lamp shed a dusty light. The voice said breathlessly, "We have not met, but Señor Chase knows me." He could not decide the sex of the speaker. The voice was high and very metallic and stumbled a little over the English words. "Come into the light," he said, with a decision which did not reflect his real state of mind. Unwillingly with dragging feet appeared a tall, thin, elderly woman. Her face was familiar to him. "I've seen you before. Who are you? What do you want?"

She simpered at him, one hand plucking at her chin. The other held a basket. "I am Señora Monti. You must forgive my addressing you like this, Señor Crane. I am so untidy. I have just run out to buy a little milk and some eggs. Our servant is sick. I recognised you"—over the syllables of the long word her voice clanked like a sheet of metal dropped from

stair to stair—"as the friend of Señor Chase." She came close to the horse and let her hand rest on his boot, from which it crept slowly to his thigh. He watched her with fascination. It was in this woman's body that his wife had been born. This piece of cracked metal was the mother of beauty, holiness, a faith in God. "My sins are my mother's and my virtues my father's. Where am I?" It was this woman, he protested, and not his wife who had lain with Caveda for curiosity. But whatever good there had been in that union, whatever element of misapplied pity, had been Eulelia's only. This woman, he was certain, had no pity. He felt her fingers, thin, old, curiously strong fingers, and tried not to withdraw himself. I must learn her, he thought, know her, conquer her. I have married her for life. "I have a daughter, señor. You have seen her and understand a mother's pride. But a mother must be cautious. Your friend is very interested in my daughter."

"You are mistaken," Crane said.

"But surely not, señor. He had not been in San Juan more than a few hours when he came to see my daughter. It was late for a call, but I love an impetuous man. A friend of his had shown him a photograph." Her cracked brain had retained, he could see, only that part of the interview that had fed her altruistic lust and her desire for a marriage portion. He repeated, without trying to hide a certain disgust: "You are mistaken," and was surprised at the vigorousness of her next remark: "She loved Señor Caveda." He could not understand her tone

of hopeful questioning.

"What if she did?"

"They are much alike," she commented. "Your friend is like Señor Caveda without his fault."

"And what is that?"

Her hand fastened closer on his thigh. "He may be caught one day." She used her daughter's expression a little altered: "So charming. So good-looking. How can she help herself now?"

He said again, with a confidence that irritated her. "You are mistaken." She put her lips up towards him and exclaimed with triumph: "She told me herself. She trusts her mother. She said to me this morning, 'Señor Crane is lucky to have such a friend'."

As if she had disposed of the question, Señora Monti began to question him. "He represents a great paper?" "It's considered so." "Well, well," she commented with a rather obscure satisfaction, "it is a fine thing for so young a man. And you, Señor Crane?"

He told her the truth with amusement to test her reaction: "Oh, I'm a poor man. I represent nothing. I do nothing. I can live." She absorbed his statement with silence and interest before she said thoughtfully: "No doubt, señor, you will find a rich wife." The hand on his thigh, her concealed inquisition, combined to disgust and irritate him. He said rashly: "Oh, I have an eye on someone who is not rich at all." "In your own country, señor?" "No, here in Spain." He added with a malice that could not but be noticed even by a woman so crazed,

"It was her photograph I first saw." The words, the obvious intention behind them, enraged her. He could tell that from the pinched mouth, the dilated eyes. The hand withdrew, but even in anger, reluctantly. Before her fingers ceased to knead his knee she cried at him: "My daughter is not for you." It might have been a virtuous woman defending a girl's honour, if the effect had not been spoilt by an addition: "I will not have you in the house. She is for Señor Chase." He left her, calling back with lack of dignity of which he was uncomfortably aware: "She does not want him." He saw her, for one moment before he turned his head, poised under the lamp, garments flapping in the evening wind, her face in the gaslight like old marble. She called after him: "We shall see. We shall see." Retreating, he had left her the field, her stretch of cobbles, her patch of dim illumination, the last word. "She said to me, 'God give me a friend like that.'" Straining forward, she watched him out of sight, the Winged Victory parodied.

PART III

CHASE sat and watched the square, saw a couple courting in the shadows, Señora Monti pass, basket in hand, a platoon of soldiers march by with ragged step towards the barracks. Some of the vigilance of the earlier day had been relaxed, and he wondered what was the cause. The danger was still there, the danger to troops shut up in a hostile town with the road closed to reinforcements. He was glad that Crane had gone and that a message to his paper had gone with him. By this time they would know in Madrid of the destruction of the bridge, and his would be the only news which would come from the isolated town. That alone would give value to his story.

The courting couple came directly below his window into the light of the inn door. He could see the man's lubricous face, the girl's stare of stupid ignorance. A word came up to him, spoken with excitement, cunning, hope. "Mañana"—to-morrow. That was what "mañana" meant to them—a closer meeting, the final embrace in the straw of a stable or against the wall in a dark street. Was that, after all, the most important act to-morrow would bring? But to-morrow for his friend meant the sunlight waking him at Aljerema, one day nearer England. If I could change places with him, he thought, and immediately rejected the dream, for that would be to

leave Crane in this town, in the danger of to-morrow, in the greater danger of being absorbed into the shadowy powers of the place. The bells were ringing here and there for Benediction. The sounds came from every quarter of the town, borne on the cold evening wind, tossed in the gusts, wildly melancholy. They reminded him, by their very difference, of evening at home, a gentle, sentimentally sad ringing across fields, the respectable slow footsteps in the porch, the gossip across the tombstones, and inside the drone of undisturbing prayer. Here men and women would be kneeling on the flags, their faces lifted in adoration of the raised Host, containing what they believed to be the living flesh and blood of God. This worship of an eternal sacrifice was evil, it accounted for wild actions, it threw a barrier of shadow between man and man and left the individual soul in loneliness. I believe in tolerance, Chase thought, and yet I could not in my heart disapprove if to-morrow Caveda sacks the churches, and again he was glad that Crane was safe. It was Eulelia Monti who had threatened to take from him his friend, from the moment that Crane had set his eyes on the portrait of an unbearable self-righteousness; but Crane was right, he thought with a bitterness he let go by unquestioned, she is beautiful. But her beauty was of the same dangerous kind as the beauty of the raised Host, the beauty that the passion of man will lend to a superstition, a shadow, a lie.

He had not heard feet upon the stairs, and when the door opened and he saw Crane his first thought

was not one of amazement, that his friend should be in San Juan and not safe in Aljerema, but an angry sneer: He has learnt from her to move softly.

Crane spoke first and it was typical of him to omit the usual statement of a self-evident fact: I have come back or I have changed my plans. He said: "I've just seen Señora Monti."

Chase ignored the remark. It seemed to him trivial, an avoidance: "Why are you here?" he asked. "You should have been in Aljerema by now." The dark face watched him for a moment in an irritating silence. Crane seemed to be choosing his explanation to appeal to a blunter mind than his own, and the implied superiority angered Chase. He said: "Surely I deserve some reason. I gave you a message for my paper. You were once a journalist. You can realise that my career may have depended on it."

Crane went over to his bed and sat down. His head was bent and his hands dangled between his knees. "You won't believe me," he said, "when I tell you that I came back principally for your sake. I wanted to warn you that our guess was right. A rising is planned to-morrow. It's a certain fact, not a fancy. The commandant ought to be warned." Chase protested: "How did you get this news? From riding along an empty road?" An idea struck him that made him regret his anger: "You haven't been risking yourself at Caveda's headquarters? I talk a lot about my paper. It's not worth a risk like that."

"Can you imagine me risking myself?" Crane asked him with a smile. "No, I got the news from a good enough source, from Eulelia Monti."

"You've seen her again?" He spoke cautiously, unwilling to accuse before, this time, he knew the facts.

"I met her on the road."

Chase said with contempt, "She ought to know. From the moment I saw her photograph I despised her, because I knew that she was going to lead to the death of somebody better than herself. Caveda should never have trusted one of these virtuous women. You are right. There's the rottenness at the centre." Crane remained silent. His silence should have reassured Chase. If Eulelia Monti had been correct in that wild surmise, which she had uttered with the calmness of a fact—"He loves me"—surely Crane would have protested, quarrelled, struck him at those words. But the thought brought him no confidence. The man who sat with bent head and dangling hands had a secret. I have enough intuition to see that, Chase claimed with bitterness to himself, but the retort formed itself promptly in the brain: So little intuition you cannot guess the secret, as he would guess it. He protested: we can't all be thought-readers and said aloud, turning his back on Crane, so as to be no longer irritated by the consciousness of his own lack of understanding: "It was good of you to come back to warn me. But you were wrong. Your safety is more important to me."

The statement, a clearer statement of his feeling than he was accustomed to make, had its reward. Crane spoke, but the statement had been made, Chase thought, altruistically. It had not been offered as a bribe to learn the other's secret.

"Yes, it was my chief reason, but not my only

one. You heard what she said this morning, that I love her." The face that had so deceitfully retained its guise of virtue in the instant of admitting a shameful union rose to Chase's sight, waiting with patience his accusation, his invective, the nearest approach to physical violence that a man can offer to what is only a shade, a delusion. He cried out, unable to retain his pain, "So she has got you too. Another good man for her lust." He had struck his blow and now he set his brain to work, to imagine the effects, to see the beauty marred, the pallor redden, the rottenness come out in a caricature of the true lines. But his mind was powerless. He could build up an imaginary face, based on the mother's crazed expression, but he could not alter the truth or the deceit, whichever it might be, that Eulelia Monti had already worn in his sight. All that his words could do was to emphasise her withdrawal from the human passions in the room, her deliberate mutilation of the senses of sight and hearing, so that she could remain, when insulted, patient, when struck, charitable, when admitting her sin, virtuous. What could one do, he thought, to such a woman? He said with despair at injuring her: "Are you content to follow Caveda?"

Crane said in a voice unusually gentle: "There's a difference, Francis." After a moment's hesitation, he added: "I've married her." The first reaction was incredulity. The woman's victory, Chase thought, cannot be so final. He means: I am going to marry her. I have promised to marry her. There must still be hope; for Crane to marry Eulelia Monti,

would mean, he was certain, the end of their friendship. It would be to see the only person he loved join the conspiracy of superstition against him, to make league with spirits, fires, crucifixes, priests, damnation. They could never again speak, even quarrel, with equality, with a modicum of understanding. Words would have a different meaning to each of them. He said: "You can't marry her. Her faith——" Crane said: "I have married her, and God knows whether I don't share her faith."

It was almost the final loss. The only qualification had been in that "God knows," the only hope. If I lose him, Chase thought, I lose everything, and with an unwonted humility he began to examine his own position. I have no other friend, he thought, in Spain; no one but acquaintances at home. I suppose that I am difficult; I exact too much from friendship; it is only his understanding, the perception that has so often frightened me, that keeps us together. I suppose that one day I shall marry and have children, but there is no woman or child who will take his place, no one who will endure my angers. He began to realise how for the last ten years he had relied on Crane's understanding. It had enabled him to be, during the hours of companionship, himself. Now I am to be alone, he thought, while he at least shares his solitude with another. It is a strange land into which he is going; but he added, with an unusual fairness to the woman, he has there a companion with the same perception as himself. That understanding would be like a flame between them, warming them with its heat in however cold

and solitary a region of the mind, providing beauty in the midst of barrenness and danger in ease. I shall be admitting soon, he thought, that he is right to join her.

Somebody laughed in the square. The sound was life, objective life thrust like a clown's bladder into the middle of his imaginings. Have I been driven to the edge of madness, he thought, by two years of loneliness in a foreign land? Life is not a war between men and spirits, it is this table, a chair, stones, bread, square shapes on which the hand may strike and bruise. Here is no friend going where I cannot follow, but a friend who has married, as I one day shall marry for companionship, for lust, for ease. This is not an occasion for torturing thoughts, but for confetti and wine, speeches, stale jokes, and a shoe tied to a cab-back. He asked aloud for reassurance, to be told that his exaggeration was near to madness, outside the understanding of a normal man. "You must think me ill, half-mad, to talk like that. I ought to congratulate you." He paused and was aware of how the old host of apprehensions raised spears against the temporary calmness of his mind. He held them with a conscious effort outside the walls of his brain. As long as they were in the air he could regard them as fantasies. Were they not, when all was said, transparent? They did not hinder his sight of basin and ewer and bed. "It's the effect of two years of Spain. How I have hated the superstitions of the place. I couldn't help feeling as though you were joining my enemies, that I was losing you by this marriage. Do you think me mad?"

He was asking for agreement that his nerves had been deranged by the danger and loneliness of his life. He wanted Crane to assert that the "fuss" was about nothing, that when he was back in England he would laugh at these fantastic notions of loss and betrayal. That what Crane believed would be true he did not doubt. He was not himself accustomed to think deeply; his mind moved roughly over all but material surfaces; he was accustomed to seek the truth of facts but not of thoughts. Crane, he knew, was not satisfied with half-truths. What Crane said now he would believe. But when Crane spoke, the words as usual were the wrong words. They angered him even while he accepted them. "No, you are right. This is the end between us. We believe in different things."

Chase protested angrily: "That's unimportant," but even as he spoke, he was aware of the raising of the spears. "There's nothing more important," Crane said. "If I believe that to-morrow I shall taste God and you believe that I'm deluded, we are so far apart——" he raised his hand and let his eyes rest with melancholy on the wall behind Chase's head. He made a small motion of relegation with his hand. "You're out of sight."

Chase said with hopelessness: "You may come back. When you're tired of that woman——" and received promptly the answer he had half expected, "Could you tire of her?" He said: "She's taken you. She's hateful to me." "You should hate me," Crane said. "I know you love her."

He made a fine show of incredulity, astonishment,

anger, "Love her?" but then lapsed weakly into silence. His incredulity had not been insincere, but now in the quiet he thought: Do I love her? Love. The word was suitably weak to express so vague a meaning. She has a certain beauty: there have been moments, thinking of Caveda, when I have desired her. Is that what Crane means? But he knew that he meant something more and something less defined. I hate her, he thought again, but wondered, faced by a vision of her, not as he had seen her first in the photograph, unbearably chaste, virtuous, spiritually proud, but as she had been when torn between differing motives, courageously, pathetically human, whether it was she he hated or only her beliefs. And do I hate her beliefs, he wondered, only because I do not share them, because they have taken my friend? Can I imagine myself in his place? Deliberately, and at first with repugnance, he imagined it, and then with a degree of envy that shocked himself and caused him to cry, in the moment of impulse, "I hate you both."

The sentence was never revoked or qualified, for in the momentary silence there was a gentle tap upon the door. "Come in." They stood facing each other in a kind of puzzled grief and into the space between inserted himself adroitly, like a bright new key into its hole, Captain Quintana. He looked from one to the other with eyebrows raised and lowered so quickly that the impertinence might only have been a flicker of the eyes, adjusting themselves to lamp-light from the dark of the passage. "Ah, Señor Chase," he said in Spanish, "you must excuse me for

thrusting myself upon you in this most discourteous way. But I have been sent by Colonel Riego. He is with the Commandant. I am afraid there is—" he pirouetted polished nails—"a very little trouble."

"I'll come now," Chase said. "When did you arrive?"

"Early this afternoon," Captain Quintana said, "and I have really had no time even to brush my hair. Would you, perhaps, lend me your brush?" He took it without leave and sat down upon the bed. "Señor Crane does not speak Spanish," Chase said. Captain Quintana rose and bowed. "I regret that my English is so poor," he said. "I fear I could not make myself understood with any grace. Perhaps you will explain." But Chase considered it unnecessary. The atmosphere of the room had been transformed by Quintana's entrance. He was himself like the clown's bladder, elongated, shiny, flamboyant, the thrust of objective life. But the dim struggle of the spirit was not entirely eliminated from the room. It still occupied that space of air and floor where Crane stood. He had turned his back on the newcomer and stared from the window at the dark web of sky, across which it was easy to parade the insubstantial figures of the brain. Captain Quintana, his legs crossed, moved the brush backwards and forwards across his hair, which lay smooth and black as paint. The gentle whisper of sound reminded Chase of the hut in the hills and through the wooden partition the noise of Captain Quintana polishing his boots.

"Would you believe it?" Quintana balanced the brushes on the edge of the table which held the ewer

and basin and searched his pockets. "The silver proved to be false." He produced a carefully folded handkerchief and unwrapped the frame from which Eulelia Monti's photograph had been taken. "I could not raise a single peseta on it." He blew gently on the frame and polished it with his sleeve. "It looks like silver. These country shopkeepers are thieves. I shall take it with me to Madrid when I go on leave." He added regretfully, "Did you find the gloves useful?"

"More useful," Chase said, "than you would ever imagine."

Quintana nodded sadly. "Yes, yes. But I still believe that this is silver." Chase interrupted his sorrowful brooding. "Why are you here?" he asked. "Is an outbreak expected?" Quintana blew some dust from his nails. "Oh, we are ready for them," he said. "We've brought down a company from the hills. If they try anything we shall have Caveda at last. It would be worth a few lives." His buoyancy was easily pricked. "Can you depend on the garrison?" Chase asked. "I saw a platoon just now. They looked a pack of frightened boys. And yesterday, when there was shooting in the square, I thought the victory was not altogether yours."

Quintana said sullenly: "The garrison can be trusted." His eyes shifted to avoid Chase's glance, and saw the broken mirror where it still lay upon the floor. "That is bad," he said and crossed himself. By the action he seemed to become an incongruous ally of Crane, and Chase looked from the one to the other in grief. What is left me? he thought and re-

ceived the answer in a voice depressingly his own: Caveda. He said to Crane: "There's no need for warnings. They are prepared." He spoke grudgingly, with the sense that between them, a barrier to which the passing minutes added brick on brick, stood his last statement of hatred. While Quintana shared the room it could not be retracted.

"Do they know," Crane asked, "of the inn where Caveda went? If a rising is prepared, he may be there to-night. It would be worth a search."

"What would be the use? They can't recognise him."

Crane said, "I could identify him. I never saw his face, but I can remember his figure only too well." Yes, Chase thought, you mistook it for mine. You are very ready to betray him. It was not his friend he confronted, brushing Quintana and the outer semblances of life, of skin and hair and lips and eyes, like lumber into a corner of the room, but a spirit that he hated, that pointed him out with shadowy malignant finger to his enemies, identified him as he would identify Caveda. "There he is. Take him." I am more Caveda, he thought, than I am you. Betray me then. You are superstition. I am Truth. But he trembled before the strength of his enemy. His enemy was supported by everything unseen, and his own defences of the visible had in that moment crumbled. He shut his eyes because the light offended him, remembering how often delusions had come to man in that form, in transfigurations, halos, in bushes burning. But the darkness behind the lids contained no comfort, for it was in the night that men had

often trafficked with lies; it was in the darkness that Nicodemus had visited Christ.

Quintana's voice said: "We should go," and it would have been the good voice of the world calling him back, if he had not been aware of Quintana's union with Crane, with the woman, with all the dissatisfied. He opened his eyes and said, "I am coming," wondering how his conduct had been viewed by the soldier. But soldiers are not perceptive, he had himself said, and Quintana noticed nothing. He was straightening his uniform before the glass. "Business after pleasure," he said politely and bowed elaborately to Crane. "By the way, you've heard of the murder of the mail-driver here. Caveda's doing, we imagine. I suppose he wanted money. There was nothing in the man's pockets when he was found. Of course," he added with light-hearted deprecation, "our own men may have rifled them. Very reprehensible, but so impossible to stop. Why, I nearly forgot my frame." He began to wrap it in his pocket-handkerchief, but paused. "I suppose your friend would not like to buy it. A hundred pesetas and he could sell it for three times that amount in England. No? Well, there is still Madrid."

"Had you heard of Emilio's death?" Chase said to Crane, and at the nod and the shadow of weariness that crossed the other's face, he felt pleasure, as though he shared a victory of Caveda's. "I'm going now with Quintana to see the Commandant." Crane said, in a voice that contained a threat as well as a warning: "The inn. Don't forget the inn."

He dwelt on the words all the way to the barracks,

rather than on the steady current of Quintana's speech. Nouns and names reached his consciousness at intervals, indicating an erratic trend of thought. "Silversmiths . . . Riego . . . Gloves . . . Caveda . . . England . . . the garrison." But when he was ushered into the Commandant's room, Chase was still under the impression that he was ready to assist, however unwillingly, in the capture of Caveda. His reception altered that view a little. He found himself at the end of a long bare room with a highly polished floor. It was brilliantly lit, and very cold. The Commandant, a small emaciated man with a grey moustache twisted aggressively, sat behind a desk and ignored his entrance with obvious intention. The only other chair was already occupied by Colonel Riego, who half rose at Chase's entrance and subsided again under the influence of his senior officer's silence and indifference. He looked older than when Chase had last seen him and very chastened. Quintana stood stiffly by the door, a rather mean monument to discipline and curiosity.

The Commandant continued to speak to Riego in a low voice which effectually excluded Chase from a share in the conversation while allowing him to hear what was said. "I have heard from Madrid. They are annoyed, seriously annoyed. It is impossible not to sympathise with their condemnation. There is no precedent for the share which you allowed a newspaper reporter to take in purely military operations. It is not even a question of a political struggle in which, one hears, these men frequently dabble."

Chase called down the length of the room. His

voice was louder than he intended, and he had the impression of an undignified hallooing along a frozen river. "General Diaz, I imagine you are referring to me." The small figure remained as still as an icicle. "Are you the English reporter? I sent for you ten minutes ago."

Chase said slowly, trying to recover the attitude of dignity which he had lost the moment before, "General Diaz, I should be glad another time to tell you the difference of rank between a newspaper correspondent and a reporter. The difference is somewhat greater than that between you and Captain Quintana. But I haven't the time to spare now." Colonel Riego smoothed his knees nervously and stared at the ground, but it was impossible to arouse anything so humble as anger in the heart of the Commandant. It was far easier for God to be angry with His creation than for General Diaz with those whom he considered his inferiors. He admitted in a voice as dry and cracked as a stale biscuit: "The fault was less yours than Colonel Riego's. You cannot be expected to know anything of military etiquette." He began to cough, raising a dark blue cotton handkerchief to his mouth. His body moved in harsh jerks. Something of the insufficiency of his body to case so self-sufficient a spirit calmed Chase. Approaching the desk he said reasonably: "I tried to be of use in your search for Caveda in return for the hospitality I was shown."

His deliberate impertinence had affected General Diaz not at all, but this reasonable statement of actions and motives deeply shocked him. He put

down his handkerchief, which was spotted with blood, and said in a voice of deep disapproval, "Nothing could be more irregular. You are a neutral."

"I was of use," Chase repeated.

General Diaz said with emphasis, leaning a little across his desk: "If you were to bring me Caveda bound hand and foot, I should hesitate to take him. You are a foreigner. You have no business to interfere in the affairs of Spain."

"I'm a newspaper correspondent," Chase said. "My business is to collect information. When I thought the information was of use to you, I let you have it at the same time as my paper." General Diaz turned away from him with a meagre gesture of distaste and addressed Riego, who sat with bent head. "What I cannot understand is your part in this, Riego. You should have known better. You have not even gained anything from this irregular connection. The information he has given you, you admit, has been valueless."

"I suppose," Chase said slowly, "if I were to tell you that I knew Caveda's headquarters in this town, where he is probably to be found to-night and that I knew a man who could identify him——" The Commandant interrupted, forcing his words from a parched throat, "I should disbelieve your information. Is there any likelihood of your having discovered anything which my men, in constant touch with the life of San Juan, do not know?"

Chase smiled at him with malice. "Those frightened conscripts. They can't even speak the local dialect. They are not in touch with any life here.

The nearest touch they have with life is death." General Diaz raised his handkerchief to his lips. "For instance, what do you know of this man Emilio, who was found dead this evening? I will tell you. He was murdered by Caveda's supporters, by his own friends. You knew him to be the mail-driver to Aljerema. You probably knew his connection with your local brothel. You did not know that he was one of Caveda's men and that he was murdered because he said too much to me."

Between short dry coughs and from a shaking body the Commandant succeeded in saying: "It is your business to produce sensational stories. It is the business of a soldier to know the truth without the help of journalists. Colonel Riego, temporarily, I trust, forgot his business. I have not. As for the man you mention, the motive was an obvious one, robbery." He became for a moment almost human. "You do not realise that a reporter is considered fair game by every liar." His handkerchief slipped from his hand and he bent awkwardly to retrieve it, recovering with difficulty his stiff unyielding pose. He was certainly a very old man. Beside him the middle-aged Riego was a rueful boy. "I must request you to leave San Juan and the whole area of military operations by midday to-morrow. I imagine that a request will be sufficient. Good-morning." His cough began again and the sound of it followed Chase out of the brilliantly-lighted room into the dark corridors of the old unhandy building. It is the end, he thought. Spain was fading. The dream was nearly over. Soon he would be able to

look back on this period as one of unhealthy fancies, a strange morbid habit of mind grown in the hills, in solitude, in contact with superstitious men. He heard steps following him and looking back he saw the old, bearded, tired face of Riego pursuing him. "Señor Chase. Señor Chase."

He waited for him under a lamp. "Well?" The old man began to explain. "It was not my doing. Please realise that, Señor Chase. Your company has always given me pleasure. The whole affair is put up. They wanted some reason to discredit me. They think I am too old, that is all." He made a gesture of despair. "I am a boy compared with him." He leant against the wall and let the light stream down his body, opened himself, as it were, to the most pitiless inspection. "It is the end. Luckily I am alone. I have no wife or children." He paused on the last words and said with an impression of deep thought, "If I could remember him. If I could remember him." The wheel of the last two days had come full circle and brought again the old man's thoughts of his dead wife, who had—it was Caveda's memory and not her husband's—been beautiful. A moment later they heard the slow stumble of a mule approach along the street and the tired imprecations of its driver. There remains, Chase thought, the peasant prophesying evil for a friend. Emilio at any rate cannot return. The wheel for him is motionless. And Eulelia Monti I shall not see again with her back to the door, defending Caveda, with her back to the crucifix, defending her own integrity; always defending something, a woman whose spirit could not

sleep. The thought reminded him that when he went, he left Crane behind him.

Riego, bathing himself in memory-giving light, as yellow and dim and insufficient as age, continued to ponder. "She had so many friends. I never knew them all. I have always been a busy man." He added in a voice of terror: "If they retire me now, I shall have nothing left. I'm not clever like you younger men. I don't read or write, and you can see how I can't even remember clearly—if there was anything I wanted to remember."

"It's cold," Chase said. "It's no good standing here in the dark. We ought to be finding supper," and felt himself a great unwillingness to stir. For what awaited him at his inn was not a friend with whom to argue and to quarrel, like the three Spaniards round the basket of charcoal, but his own statement of hatred that had stood now too long unqualified to be removed by a word, a look, a movement of the hand. "I can't eat," Riego said. "I have got to do something. Listen. You told General Diaz that you had information of Caveda's whereabouts. He would not listen to you. But tell me. I still command my men. If I could capture him to-night, I should not fear the Commandant's complaints." He put out a hand and touched Chase's sleeve. "I could lay a ghost." It was not a fanciful reason that he offered. It was spoken in all seriousness, as if he was indeed haunted by the ghost of a woman of whom he had no very clear memory.

"You should tell that to my friend," Chase said harshly. "That's not the kind of appeal to make to me."

I don't know anything about ghosts. I deal in facts. I'm a journalist. If Caveda is captured quietly to-night, I have no good story to take away with me to-morrow. But if there is an outbreak in the morning, then my career is made. You see, these are facts. Ghosts have no appeal for me." But even while he spoke he was aware of the ghost of Caveda, for Caveda was more a ghost than a real man. He was a spirit untrammelled by a body. The body could only inhabit one place at a time, but Caveda was everywhere. He might have looked out of the mail-driver's eyes. He might have been in the body of the peasant courting in the inn shadow. He might share the limbs of the wizened man who watched them talk from the light of the red lamp. If it had not been, he qualified his thought, for the man's threadbare clothes. But the clothes did not make the man. My clothes are generally neat enough, but I have not yet brushed from them the mountain dust and the mudsplashes of the village where I sheltered. He thought again: Broad hands, but his gloves fitted mine; small feet: are my feet not small? A readiness to laugh; I had it when I first came to this country; the scent of civilisation, a desire for the body of Eulelia Monti, a dislike of priests and their ways; decision. That I had also, until Crane joined me. Facts deserted him for the moment in the temporary madness of an idea. Caveda was in myself. He used my eyes, spoke with my tongue, felt cold and heat, lust and satiety with my body, but I am losing him. Only a shading of his spirit is left with me, enough to desire and hate

the woman, enough to be betrayed by Crane. "I can identify him. There he is. Take him. Hang him and leave me to my woman, my shadows, my ghosts, my eaten god." Facts, facts, facts. He put his hands to the wall behind him, rubbed his hands against the rough surface till the skin broke. If any man had ever deserved death at the stake, he thought, it was the mind-proud ecclesiastic who had tried to shake mankind's faith in even that comfort and to transform a stone into an illusion.

"No," he said aloud, "you will never now get me to betray Caveda. You must go to Crane for that." The last phrase had not been meant as a suggestion. It had been a relegation of Riego to the region to which he had belonged. He was surprised when the old man took his remark seriously, nodding his bearded head. "Yes, yes. Thank you. Something might be done there. I will go to him." Chase called out, as he began to move down the street: "Wait. I didn't mean it seriously." He searched his brain for an objection, but could find none to appeal to a man so desperately in need. "You can't. You won't find him in." But his last words were addressed to the walls, the dark, the lamplight, anything but Riego. The old man had turned a corner and gone. Now was the moment for decision, that personal quality of decisiveness to which Crane had compared Caveda's attitude on the steps of the Montis' house. It was only necessary to follow Riego, to hold him back if necessary by force. But a whisper confused him: "Let him go. Let Crane follow his nature. Let him betray you, betray Caveda, betray all the world

to which he once belonged. He is your enemy. You have said to him: I hate you both, and it is true. Hatred is the right emotion to feel towards anything so different." He protested: "For Caveda's sake," and the answer came more insidiously than ever, lower than a whisper, formed like a breath of air, an invisible draught of penetrating power: "Warn Caveda. He will know how to guard himself." For a moment the lamplight seemed to shed upon the opposing wall a picture of Crane cowering into the shadows, as two bats passed, circling, rubbing fur, whispering into obscurity, and the instinct of protection returned: Let us go back, wait till daylight, courage capitulating before the greater power of cowardice. But even instincts could be answered, and illusory pictures faded rapidly. "That same evening he betrayed you."

He took two steps along the street and two steps back. "He has another protection. It would be his own claim——" He came here to help me of his own accord. The answer was immediate: "His purpose could be counted in hours. The same evening he betrayed you. What has he brought you but a woman that sucks your decision, an unsatisfied desire, the loss of something you loved? You hate him. You have said so yourself." It was easy to hate when the brain could fill the ears with that assurance of betrayal: "I could identify him, even though I never saw his face."

"What do you want?" Chase cried out angrily to the small wizened man who continued to examine him from under the second lamp. He associated his

indecision with him, was ready to attribute to him one of the warning voices. The man said sadly: "Can't a man watch in peace?" When Chase's walk brought him again to the Spaniard's side, he asked him with irritation: "What are you waiting for? If you are watching me, go."

The thin man stepped forward with one hand outstretched and in a confidential tone said: "If you want to know the truth, I am new to this work." With an excited shudder and a voice of pride he continued, "The man before me was murdered. It is the chances of the profession." He looked over his shoulder and up and down the street. "Things are very quiet to-night."

"But to-morrow?" Chase said. "Will they be quiet then?" He thought: It will take Riego five minutes to reach Crane's inn. Another five minutes for him to make himself understood; half an hour for him to complete his arrangements. But it is more likely that he will wait to raid the inn until the early hours of the morning, when all will be asleep. There will be plenty of time to give the warning.

"Quiet?" the man asked evasively. "You are a foreigner. You don't want things quiet. Not at night particularly." His meaning escaped Chase; but his thin gnat voice cast a web of possible intentions over the brain. "Mind you," he went on, "there's nothing here to equal what you can see in some countries. I dare say even in London. You might say—then why should I patronise you? I would answer—we may not be better here, but there is always a difference. That's true, isn't it?"

Out of the web the evasive man cast, the mind struggled, to face possibilities. If I warn Caveda . . . But small threads from the web remained entangled. "You are a foreigner." But a foreigner not only to Riego, to Diaz, to mule-drivers and peasants and men chatting out of windows, but a foreigner to Crane and to Eulelia Monti. "Can you imagine a man tiring of her?" and inextricably coiled with that thought the broken thread, the thin trailing leg, as it were, of the gnat: "You don't want things quiet. Not at night particularly."

"Of course what I like about the work," the man was saying, "is that it takes me out of doors. I was employed inside before, and it's not the same thing, not the same thing at all. Oh, it has meant a good deal to me, that murder. One meets interesting people too, about like this. You, señor, for instance."

"Be quiet a moment," Chase glared at him and in the momentary silence thought clearly: If I warn Caveda, I endanger Crane. He thought with sanity, with coolness, as he would have thought a week ago, with amazement that for Caveda's sake he could consider the smallest risk to his friend. But the mood did not last; it was dispelled by an awareness of his surroundings, of the tall houses, balcony above balcony, the narrow street, the gutters running with pollution, the persistent gnat voice, and the dim illumination that hemmed him in with shadows. The lamp, swaying a little in the wind, shone on a dark archway and on a small carved group of weeping women and a man in agony upon a cross. The nails gave him no more agony, he thought, than they did

the thieves on either side. Men have suffered injustice often since. Men have been betrayed. "I can identify him." You have learnt that, he thought, from your God, for if Judas betrayed God, God betrayed Judas, praying in the garden, waiting for his coming.

"Now, señor, are you coming? If I did not think that you would obtain really high-class pleasure at our establishment, I would not approach you."

"Listen." Chase caught the man's shoulder and shook him. The eyes winced a little in preparation for the Puritanical blow. "Can you take me to Caveda? Do you know where he is? I want to warn him of danger." The man did not seem to understand. His words ceased to be evasive. "Don't be angry, señor. I can promise you, you will not be disappointed. The best women in Spain, señor." The phrase caught at the mind and altered its trend. Even while his thoughts turned like a vane in the wind, he was able to consider with regret the lost decisiveness. "The best women? Do you mean the most beautiful, the most virtuous?"

The man said with relief: "The gentleman is making fun of me. We see many Americanos. They are very satisfied."

"If you had a woman there called Eulelia Monti I would come with you."

"I don't know all their names, señor. It is possible she is there. Come with me and we will see."

"No, it would be no use," Chase said. "She belongs to a different house. It was not at your establishment that Caveda enjoyed her."

"Señor Caveda," the man said vaguely, "is a man of taste."

"Take me to him." The man protested. "How can I, señor? I do not know him. One hears, that is all . . ." Chase pressed him: "What does one hear?" "Why, señor, you know as much as I do. That Señor Caveda believes in liberty, free thought, democracy." The vague abstract words tumbled from his mouth like bubbles, to float in the air a moment, catching the light in their thin, beautiful, iridescent surfaces, and then to break, leaving a little sud upon the lips. "No taxes for the poor. A share of the rich man's wealth."

"I must see him," Chase said. "He is in danger."

"He is always in danger, señor. He is a man whom they will always hunt, but they will never find." Chase repeated: "I must warn him," and received a final answer, "I cannot lead you into the hills, señor." There was nothing more to be done save visit the inn to which Crane had followed Caveda. It was unlikely that Riego had moved with sufficient quickness to have had the place watched already. He began to walk rapidly down the street and was aware of the other man's feet tapping lightly on the stones a stride behind. "There is nothing you can do better to-night, señor, than visit our establishment. There is nothing better than a woman if you are worried, restless . . ." Yes, there was truth in that, Chase thought. Crane had found his cure, but he doubted whether the right medicine was to be found in a provincial brothel. The man began to lose his breath in the effort to talk as well as to keep up, and his sentences

became more and more fragmentary, more and more stray unrelated words flung like a handful of mixed sweets to a child. By that time they had almost reached the market place, but he did not despair. Perhaps Chase's silence encouraged him. It had at least the tolerance of indifference. It was better than abuse or a blow. Then he said in a voice suddenly cold: "Señor, we are followed."

Chase stopped and listened. The cessation of noise, the quietening of footsteps and voice, gave silence a shape, in the same way that the first ripples of a tide may here and there assume the circular form of a child's moat, the appearance of letters which have been carved into the sand. But then the great waves follow, the moat crumbles, the letters sink into the anonymity of the flooded beach. So silence became perfect, no longer forming itself round the ring of steps, round little lascivious words. After a moment Chase said, "No. I can hear nothing." He moved forward cautiously on his toes and the man kept so close to his side that their legs sometimes touched. The pander began to whisper, a little reassured: "The man before me was murdered, señor. There are risks in my profession."

Again Chase halted. His companion was not prepared and took two steps more along the street, and as he stopped Chase heard what might have been the echo of his footfalls wake in the darkness behind. He whispered: "Stay here. I'm going back," and received in silence the other's low passionate plea: "You cannot leave me alone to be murdered, señor." But already on raised feet he had begun his retreat,

which was in reality an advance towards whatever danger the dark might contain. This was action, he thought with relief, one hand on the pistol in his pocket. Here was no harassed play with shadows in the mind. There were men to be met, for ghosts were silent. He heard with pleasure the pimp take to his heels and run towards the market square. The clatter of his feet stumbling on the cobbles was exaggerated in the narrow street. The reverberations were banded like fives balls from wall to wall, window to window, balcony to balcony. They might have been caused by ten men in a race for safety, certainly by two. Under the cover of sound he stepped close back against a wall and waited. He was rewarded by a renewal of the spurious echoes. Cautious footsteps had given birth to cautious sounds, but the panic-stricken awoke something of a different quality. One set of sounds gave an impression of speed, so did the other; but one came from stumbling feet, the other from feet running with certainty. Chase stepped from the wall into the centre of a pack of men. There were at least six of them and the number took him by surprise. It would be worse than useless to flourish a revolver; it would probably cause his death. His hand fell from his pocket and he faced them with hands patently empty.

They were more surprised than he. He had at any rate been expecting two pursuers; they had been expecting no one. Their quarry they had believed to be fifty yards away. There was a period that seemed to Chase very long not only of silence but of inaction. No one spoke and no one moved. The dim

shapes stood round him in a circle and merely stared. If he had risked a movement he might have escaped, but he did not wish to transform that ring of tall stones into men. For the moment he had the sensation of controlling them. They were like a miniature Stonehenge and he the priest. The impression remained until the lamplight blown by the wind from a swinging lantern woke flashes in a knife and gave him an indication of the true position, of priest and sacrifice. Then he spoke: "Well, señores, was it me you were wanting or my companion?" His complete inability to resist or to escape made him calm. If they are thieves, he thought, I shall be dead in a few moments and the prospect did not frighten him. Death was extinction, and extinction was not in itself anything to fear. Fear could belong only to the pain that would precede it, and that physical pain, he thought with the lucidity of a man philosophising in his bed, could not be compared for anguish with betrayal, the loss of a friend he loved, the torments of an unaccustomed indecision. It could be compared only to undignified things, to a dentist's drill, the pains of rheumatism. If they were Caveda's men, it would be foolish to complain that they had come to him, instead of he to them.

His words were like an incantation giving life to insentient matter, the ring of stones shivered into small movements and became human, in the shifting of feet, the slow contraction of the space between himself and them. Their silence and the pettiness of their motion emphasised the quiet of the street, which was quite deserted now by the sounds of fear, the

running stumbling feet. He said again: "Señores, I am here. What do you want?" He wondered whether to assume that they were thieves and to empty his pockets before them, but realised in time that the least movement of a hand to a pocket would be accepted as a threat. The shapes in front and to his side he could see and could, in the last resort, resist, but behind him a knife might be within six inches of his back. He regretted now his reckless relinquishment of the wall.

"You are the Englishman?" a shadow in front of him accused rather than questioned, and the sound of speech from one of those threatening, only half human shapes relieved his tension. It gave hope at least of argument, though he realised by the form in which the question was put that if these were thieves it would be useless to deny the possession of money. To a Spaniard of the lower classes his nationality alone indicated an almost fabulous wealth. They would accept no denial, but stab him first and search him afterwards. On the other hand, if they were Caveda's men, they were probably aware of his visit to the Commandant and had seen him speak to Riego. To them he was undoubtedly a danger, but was he a danger that must be dispatched incontinently after the manner of Emilio?

He said slowly, feeling his way towards minds of which the reflection was hidden from him by the darkness: "I'm looking for someone you may know. Someone I must warn of danger." The circle round him narrowed a little. In the swaying of the light towards him he was aware of a second knife, and his

back pricked, the flesh recoiling from the approach of pain. His mouth began to dry and he was afraid of the effect on his speech. Knowing the danger of the least sign of fear, he longed to pass to his opponents the responsibility of words, but all that he could get from them was one uncompromising word "Who?" It was the same shape as before who questioned him, and that assumption of leadership gave him encouragement. If he was the leader, there might be expected from him at least some motion of command to prepare for the first blow and death. He answered: "If you would take me to him, I am certain you would be rewarded, and it could at least do you no harm." He was slowly approaching the name, afraid of too sudden a confession of his knowledge, letting them know first his object and what he required of them. The thought of the next sentence dried his lips more than the sight of the knives, for if they were thieves, it would deliver him to them without hope. "You need be afraid of nothing. Before you do what I ask you can disarm me. Look, I have nothing in my hands. There is a pistol in the left-hand pocket of my coat. You can take it away."

Again the shadow repeated the one syllable, as if nothing else that he had said had been of interest, "Who?" With a shudder of the flesh at what the result of the word might be, Chase spoke the name, "Caveda." It was his body only that trembled, his mind was clear, awake, almost unfearing, and the contrast astonished himself. There was a mystery there and he had dealt lately with too many

mysteries to desire another. The whole ring closed in a little upon him, and the leader asked with a threatening stupidity: "What do you want Caveda for?" Then they are Caveda's men, he thought with relief, and said in a tone of command, his lips refreshed with hope: "I have told you already. I must warn him of danger. Take me to him. There's no time for delay."

The ring wavered, broke its form, and enabled him to put his back against the wall. The men paid him no attention, consulting together in low voices. If he had wished he could have escaped, but he dismissed the idea. He was seeking Caveda, not his own safety. At last the leading shadow said with reluctance: "We cannot take you to Caveda. We do not know where Caveda is."

"Take me then," Chase said, "to someone in authority." He added boldly, "To the inn off the market." His knowledge seemed to surprise and frighten them. They became dangerous for a moment, hands twisting knives, until their leader re-established his supremacy with a command: "Take away his pistol." He began to explain to Chase, almost with politeness, what he must do. He must walk in the centre of the group, arm in arm with one of them, as if they were a party of friendly revellers. There might be soldiers in the market place. If he made a sign or a sound to show that he was a captive, they would stab him and run.

There were two soldiers in the market place, but they paid the group no attention. One of them was asleep, leaning against a wall, snoring a little with

open mouth; the other had his back turned as they crossed the square. Chase noticed, before they passed into the side street, that a lamp was burning in his bedroom. When they reached the inn the leader knocked on the door. Almost immediately a light shone beneath it, and he leaned his head against the woodwork and whispered into the keyhole. Chase caught part of his words "*Patria y Rey.*" It was a fragment of the Carlist motto.

The door swung open to admit them, and all the acrid odours of a Spanish inn, the smell of goats, dung, ammonia, swept out into the cold pure night. But Chase noticed at once an incongruous scent; someone inside was smoking expensive cigars. He heard the door bolted behind him, the sound of steel bars shot home four times, an unnecessary protection for an ordinary inn, harbouring little more than wooden benches, wine skins and a drunk guest or two. There were no signs of any unusual riches in the bare passage where he was left standing. A gas jet flickered on wooden walls that had been newly stained, roughly and unevenly so that the varnish hung in heavy brown folds. He was left alone, unguarded, his escort melting away along the dim passage, up wooden stairs. No one but a man mad with fear would try to escape past those thick and numerous bars. He could hear the leader of the men who had escorted him talking in a room on the left of the passage. There was no sign of haste, of any urgent wish to hear his news. And yet in perhaps half an hour the soldiers would arrive. But that, he reassured himself, was not likely. Riego would

surely wait till dawn.

The minutes passed and he began to fidget. He had never cared for loneliness. Companionship, talk, action, anything but silence, he could enjoy. But now in the dismal blue flicker of the gas nothing but thoughts came to him. They came to him as faces speaking uncomfortable words: Crane, who had borrowed a woman's unbearable certainty of rectitude ("I can identify him"); Eulelia Monti, white, proud, determined to be just ("He loves me. He has everything to forgive"). He found his mind stumbling heavily among ideas which could not be seen, heard, felt. If the mere fact of loving her, he thought, gives him the right to judge, have I not too the right? He said that I loved her and he is proud of his intuition. Then too I have the right to condemn him, for it is certain that I loved him last year, last week, yesterday, even to-day. But what good is there in being appointed judge, if one has no power to inflict a sentence? And if I had that power what would the sentence be? The answer came at once: eternal separation for their love, death for his betrayal. But all that I can condemn them to, he thought with pain, is my hatred, and they neither have even the need of my love. They are sufficient to each other, while I am not sufficient to myself. If I still loved him, I should be useless to him. He has found both her and her God. The only use left me is to save Caveda. I am in the dark alone, he thought, the only light within me that blue bone of gaseous flame, but he is in the light, for she is light. I must be fair to her, for she is that. One could hate and

disbelieve and yet allow one's mind to rest in the sight of that cool metallic lustre. He thought: She was mine before she was yours. I saw her first, I held her picture in my hands and her face in my thoughts. I was the first to speak to her. You came afterwards, betraying me and then Caveda. You would have deserted her too, if she had not stood in your way and led you back. Why should I be powerless before a coward? The answer came with anger: She needs a coward. Only a coward would accept her allies, the shadows, ghosts, beliefs.

A woman appeared at the end of the passage, peering at him, her bony neck thrust forward like a tortoise's. He called to her: "Where is Señor Caveda? Am I to be left here all night?" She approached him cautiously, and when she was close she whispered in the cantankerous voice of age, "Such goings-on. I don't approve, mind you." She might have been referring to a grand-daughter's flirtation.

"What do you mean?" She opened her arms wide, fluttering like a hen. "Guns. Pistols. You've never seen . . ." She moved a dry shrunk mouth, and shuffled by into a room on his right, where he could hear her striking matches in the dark, muttering all the time. His patience was exhausted. He moved down the passage and opened the door of the room into which his captor had gone. At a wooden table stained with wine, a tall stout man in city clothes sat before a draughts board, smoking a cigar. As Chase entered he was moving a piece with the tip of one finger, squinting down at it, his chin held rigidly erect by a high collar. The man who had

brought him to the inn leant against the wall. He was saying with slow caution: "There may, you know, be something in it." He was young with a stupid handsome face and a graceful but slightly overblown body. He wore the usual short jacket of a peasant, the tightly-fitting trousers, and reminded Chase of an operatic tenor. Chase said angrily: "Have I got to wait in that passage all night? I want to see Caveda." The fat man moved a draught, blew a cloud of blue odorous smoke from his nostrils and looked at Chase in silence. His collar had made a thin red line round his throat under the double chin. "This is the Englishman," the young man explained. The draughts-player shook his head at Chase. He might have been reproving a child who had interrupted his game. "We can't take you to Caveda," he said. "It wouldn't do at all, not at all." His eyes had already fallen to the pieces. "Is he here, in this inn?" Chase persisted.

"It won't do any harm to tell you that," the fat man said. "No, he's not here." "Is he in San Juan?" "Come, come, you know. You are not a schoolmaster. All these questions." Chase with an effort kept his voice calm. "If you care so little for what I have to say," he said, "why did you trouble to have me followed?"

The fat man took the cigar from his mouth and regarded his companion with perplexity. "That's a fair question, Enrique," he said. "Why did you follow him?" The young man, taking a newspaper from the table, crumpled it petulantly. He said sulkily, "He was seen visiting Diaz."

"There you are," the fat man jumped a draught from one side of the board to the other, where he crowned it rakishly with a fallen opponent. "You aren't interested, then, in what I have to tell you?" Chase asked, and received the astounding reply, "We are waiting to hear what it is." Chase said with an irony that sounded laboured even to himself: "I don't want to interrupt your game, but in the next few hours you may expect the soldiers here." He had expected to gain some satisfaction from the disclosure, to stir the stout immobility before him, but in that he was disappointed. The eyes were raised, but the tip of the index finger lingered still upon a piece. On the handsome young man the effect was different. He swung out an impassioned arm like an actor: "When? How do you know?" He did not wait for his questions to be answered, but turning to his fat companion seemed to plead with him: "Caveda must be warned to stay away."

The other smiled amiably: "Caveda's clever. He will not be caught. We cannot send to him now. The messenger might be followed." The young man lamented with expressive hands: "What can we do without Caveda?" Chase thought that he could detect a certain sourness in the rejoinder: "You can take my orders. I can manage well enough. Go and warn the men to be ready. If the soldiers come, the shooting begins earlier, that is all. It was what I always wanted." When Enrique had gone, the fat man settled himself deeper in his chair and regarded Chase with satisfaction. His voice purred with pleasure. "Señor, let me introduce myself. I am

Caveda's chief helper. You might call me his strategical expert. Do you play draughts, señor? None of these fellows do. Even Caveda, I regret, shows a certain attitude to the game which I resent. There is nothing despicable in draughts. I play it whenever I have a moment to spare. Against an imaginary opponent. I lend him all my skill. I cannot get so good a game with any other man."

"Doesn't it always end in a draw?" Chase asked. The strategist blew a cloud of tobacco smoke towards the ceiling and moved his neck a little in the high yellowed collar. "I lend my skill, señor, but not my inspiration. It comes to me even in sleep. I dream of the black-and-white board and see how a move here, a sacrifice there of two, three, even four pieces, will lead me to a crowning—so," he shifted a piece to the back line, "and a complete victory. See, señor," and he moved the crowned piece back and forth in a confusing pattern. "I can see the whole game spread out before me now to the last move." He leant forward and asked in a low voice: "Where did you get your information?"

Chase said slowly, seeing himself in that moment as counsel for the prosecution, reading out the count of Crane's offences, as jury listening and approving, as judge directing, condemning, as every member of the Court save the defence, "An Englishman staying in my hotel followed Caveda here last night. He has by now informed Colonel Riego. I know that he is willing to identify Caveda. You'll have the soldiers here before dawn."

The fat man pondered. "Of course he must not be

allowed to identify Caveda. Are you sure he can do it?"

Chase felt himself wrapped in the austerity, dignity, mercilessness of human justice. It fell round him as warmly, as comfortably as the robes of the judge, hiding pettinesses, failings, stupidity, blindness. *I am the Law*. He said: "Yes, I am certain of it." A finger pushed a draught forward into a space where it was exposed to an opponent's piece. The fat man said apologetically: "There's only one way then." Chase nodded, the black cap raised between his hands. He would have liked to have adorned the occasion with some moral reflections, pointed out to the prisoner at the bar the enormity of his offence. "We cannot take him from the inn," the fat man said. Chase sat down at the table and put his head between his hands. There were no grey squares on the black-and-white board.

The other banged on the table with his fist and presently Enrique returned. "Well, Miguel?" he asked with a sulky droop to the mouth. "I have done what you said. We are all ready." "Three men on the roof?" "Three men on the roof." "Listen. For the signal to fire I will whistle twice."

"That is understood," the young man said. Miguel leant forward across the table in a confidential attitude. "We'll allow them to come to the door and ask to be let in. Silence, you understand. If they move back along the street we fire. When fresh men come up, we fire. In that way we shut two or three of them against the door in shelter, where they can do nothing." He laughed unexpectedly, low down in his

throat, his Adam's apple trembling like a screwed billiard ball against a cushion. "Except live, of course. Except live. And not even that, you know, when they are taken in the rear by our friends." He ran his finger between the collar and the flesh, easing the strain. "Listen. There's something more to be done. Come here." He squinted sideways at Chase with cautious diminished eyes. Enrique walked negligently to his end of the table and leant his ear towards the great head. The voice whispered up at him. It sizzled with suppressed excitement. Presently Enrique left the room.

"And now," Chase asked, "can I go?" Miguel spread large hands across the table. "You are a journalist. Why should you wish to go? You are hungry perhaps. You shall have supper. You are sleepy. We will find you a bed."

"I prefer my own," Chase said. The fat man leant back in his chair and with a soft voice questioned him. "With your acquaintance, the Englishman, who is betraying Caveda?" His words took effect, but not the effect which he had intended. Chase asked with desperation: "Who is Caveda? What is Caveda?" aware suddenly of the depth of his ignorance. He knew nothing of Caveda to compare with what he knew of Crane. Even though all that he knew of Crane he had come to hate, hate was a form of familiarity. One could not hate a man without a face, a man compounded of abstract qualities. He said: "Will you let me go?" and got for reply an uninterested negative. Already a finger yearned towards the pieces on the board and only

courtesy towards the stranger restrained him. "There is a bed upstairs, señor."

At least, Chase thought, I can think there, consider what I have done. He said: "I'll go to it," and pausing at the door added, "You'll wake me before anything happens?" "Of course, of course." The high collar prevented the head from nodding and substituted for it a movement upward, like that of a seal craving for fish. In the passage outside he found the old woman and asked her to show him to a bedroom. She obeyed unwillingly, preceding him with the same harassed flutter of the arms. Sitting on an iron bedstead in the light of a single candle he questioned her too: "Do you know Caveda?"

The answer took him completely by surprise: "He is almost my son."

"What do you mean?" She said: "He had my milk." She grinned at Chase, the hair falling across her forehead, her knotted fingers locked together in enjoyment: "What gums he had. The ruffian." She prepared to come back into the room. "Oh, I could tell you things." His question had unlocked for her the past. In that book other old women might read of death, beauty, delight, in the form of blood, of flowers, of a naked body; for her all the grey years were coloured by that single suckling of another's child. Her lips crinkled with satisfaction. "So hard they were." Chase shut the door on her and knew that he was shutting out what had been his chief ally, the tangible truth. These were the memories, he did not doubt, that one retained at the end of life, what had impressed the body, left its

mark in pain or a gross pleasure. The so-called spirit was fluid. One might expect a river to retain a flower one cast on it, between the same trees, after many years, as to imagine that the spirit kept the seal of what had charmed or grieved it. That was the old woman's message, the message of all those who stood outside his door.

And I have condemned Crane, he thought, for what? For an injury done to my body? I feel no pain there. If he had struck me with a knife, the scar would remind me of his act after half a century. But if I ask myself in ten years' time, what did he do? will fading memories of a business of ghosts justify me to myself? He blew out the candle and lay down upon the bed. He was in the dark now to which ghosts belonged and he longed to be convinced by them. I have condemned him on your grounds. Tell me that I was right. Tell me that it is not the madness, the hysteria of loneliness among people I cannot understand. Tell me that the war between him and me is a real war, that the spirit remembers. It became not the darkness and ghosts that he was addressing, but Eulelia Monti as she had appeared in her picture, unwaveringly convinced of the rightness of her cause. You have defended Caveda and yourself: cannot you defend me? Doesn't your creed command you to love your enemies? Say that I was right. Say that your lover betrayed me by loving you.

The appeal, in his imagination at least, was not made in vain. The expression of rectitude itself was a partial agreement. She made a claim: He is mine now, not yours. Your spirit can suffer and for that

very reason it can remember. It was Descartes' philosophy with a difference. "I suffer, therefore I am." He closed his hand and the nails pricked the flesh. "My body suffers, therefore it exists." The spirit suffers and therefore it exists. The statement was, he knew, to some extent a capitulation. But the difference is still there; I have not joined you. My spirit is of a different kind. It feeds on the body, on contacts, on other men; it does not feed as yours on other spirits. It dies with the body. It believes in men who suffer, but not in suffering ghosts or Gods. It was a muddled argument, the argument of sleep. He would have been prepared to swear that his lids had never closed and that it was with wide eyes that he had seen, accepted, argued with, the face of Eulelia Monti. But the sudden awareness of a grey light in the room conclusively proved that he had slept. It was not the kind of sleep that refreshed the brain. The brain was more tired than it would have been by daylight reasonings and woke to the same problem. He knew that the problem was identical, but it had been cleared of extraneous thought and was presented to him now as the bare question: Do I hate or do I love? There was no longer any question of right or wrong, of justice or injustice. For justice involved also the consideration of mercy.

Closing the door softly he strayed into the passage. From below came a murmur of talk. A man trod by him, gun in hand, going to an upper floor. He went downstairs. Nothing was changed in the room of last night. Miguel still sat before the draughts board, and only the full array of pieces showed that the

game was a new one. Apparently he had not slept at all. The lack of rest had disturbed him only to the extent of reddened eyes and a slight indecision of the hand. Enrique turned with nervous quickness at Chase's entrance and scowled. His fleshly handsome jaw was blue with the morning's hair. "Buenos dias, señor," the fat man nodded upwards, and easing his collar with a finger, said with a kind of feline amusement: "They are coming. They are coming." He drew a watch from his waistcoat pocket, letting it dangle from a heavy silver chain laden, like a fish line, with small weights, medals, keys, inscribed rings. "Four o'clock. There is a man watching the door outside. And there are six men at each end of the street. You could not go now, señor, if you wished. Listen. Perhaps it is the signal." Through the window of the little room, where the gas still burned and warmed the cold grey, came the four separate hammer strokes of a great clock. "Half a minute fast," said the fat man and adjusted his watch.

All three men listened with expectation while the reverberations died into the chill and silence of the early day. In another hour shutters would rise, carts would rumble on the stones, and the first voices call. But now they were able to hear the final echoes, like pins falling on to a metal sheet. "They are not coming," Chase said. Enrique swung towards him in a nervous fury: "Be quiet. Let me listen." But the silence was immediately broken by his superior. "Yes, they are coming. I can hear their steps." His ears were apparently aware of what neither of the younger men could catch, the sound of cautious feet

coming up the road. "Shall I look out?" Enrique asked. Miguel with large hands spread out flat in front of him shook his head. "No. We need not show that we are prepared. We shall have the benefit of the first shots." Enrique began to tremble. "If only Caveda were here. That would be worth more." The fat man said sharply: "Those shots may be worth one, two, three lives." The great bulk sank lower in the chair and from it came a hum of satisfaction. "They are very close now," he said, but the first that the others heard of the soldiers' approach was a rat-tat-tat upon the door. Enrique said suddenly in a whisper: "How do you know who it is? It may be Caveda wanting to come in. I must look and see." It was evident that Caveda had inspired devotion in the handsome, fleshly, stupid young man. His lieutenant's jealousy was equally plain. "You will not move," he commanded.

Again an invisible herald claimed entrance. Miguel pulled out his watch and from the long chain that draped his belly removed a diminutive silver whistle. He raised a finger enjoining quiet and all his mind seemed to become absorbed in listening for footsteps coming or going, for a mark. Again there was a hammering on the door and a voice demanded admittance. A smile broadened his mouth slowly, a hand eased his collar, and his fat thighs shifted in the seat. His moment was coming nearer. He swung his watch gently to and fro. When the gaslight caught the polished silver, it was as though a bright ironic spirit darted from wall to wall, imprisoned for a moment with humanity, in the grey early morning, in the

small room. For the fourth time a hand beat.

Enrique suddenly lost all control. He was a man born for the operative gestures of war, the flashing of knives, the posing, the speeches, the charge; not for a long stillness, for maturing plans, suspense. He screamed now at his leader: "You do not want Caveda here. You would rather have him killed. I do not believe you know who that is. It may be Caveda."

"Be quiet," Miguel said, but he was untroubled, too absorbed in watching his flower come to fruit. Chase wanted to call to him: "Be careful. He means what he says. Answer him," but he would have been too late. With a cry of "I will see," Enrique had run to the window. His hands were on the sash, prepared to thrust the window up, when the glass was shattered by a shot. That was the order in which Chase placed the sounds, the breaking of the glass in the small room was so much louder than the explosion in the open air which caused it. Enrique turned from the broken pane and stepped back towards the table, cautiously, as if he trod a stage unusually small and must be careful of his entrances and exits. The handsome stupid face shone with the reflected glory of the music of which he was about to be the vehicle. The head went back, until he was singing for the circle, for the gallery, for the "gods"; he was not singing at all, but lying on his back, while life left his throat in a stream of blood.

Miguel jumped to his feet, the great hands scattering the wooden pieces from the board. Chase stood and marvelled at the man's size and strength. The

dying or dead man aroused neither his sympathy nor his interest, but the living aroused his envy. Seated he had appeared a little gross; standing with his head bent to avoid the low ceiling his fatness dwindled, became almost his strength. He said softly, but with a vigour of feeling that gave the words an invective's force: "The fool. The silly fool." He squinted down at the body from over his collar and touched with his foot the blood which was already ceasing to run. "What good has he done for Caveda? He's dead." He stepped close to the wall and listened, then turned to Chase a face wrinkled like a baby's with perplexity. "I had promised myself the first shot," he said. "I never thought they would dare." Keeping close to the wall, he passed into the unlighted passage, where night seemed to linger yet. He said, "They are still at the door," and got immediate confirmation in the crash of a body against it. The impact hardly stirred the great oak block with its four bolts. Miguel said with an enjoyment only temporarily quenched: "We shall have them soon now. They'll go back for a ram," and stood waiting, with the little silver whistle between his lips.

Suddenly the dark passage was lit by a scarlet flash along the walls and the wood of the door splintered. The sound of the explosion hardly reached them. It was hurled backwards along the sleeping street. But the first smell of powder came in a thin trickle through the crack of the door. Miguel began to creep back along the passage, his feet padding in heelless slippers. "They'll never get in that way," he said and stopped suddenly. "They are moving

away." He put the whistle back between his lips and blew softly twice, a beautiful silvery note like a bird's call. It seemed to beat up the stairs on a bird's wings, bearing a message of leaves and water and the hum of flies. What replied to it was death. The whole house became full of sound and smoke. A picture rattled against the wall until the glass broke and strewed the floor, plaster dropped from the ceiling in small flakes, like snow falling through summer thunder. All the seasons ran riot in the house, for as the dark faded a kind of brown autumnal fog came down the stairs in blocks, in swathes like cut corn. The noise swept into the street and returned with breaking glass. The flashes ran along the walls, the floors, the ceiling.

Chase stood back against the wall. He felt no fear, but at first an observer's curiosity and next a wonder. This was Crane's doing. This storm that swept against the house, this raging of the elements within. The fog dried the lips and lay along them like powder; gritty particles like jam seeds got between the teeth and the tongue felt raw and swollen. He was alone. Miguel had padded back into his small room, to Enrique's body and the scattered game. Then the door into the street shook, splintered, almost gave. It forced him to take an active part. He called out to Miguel: "They are at the door again. They've brought a ram." Miguel emerged. He seemed smaller; some of his confidence had gone and he swore without restraint at the men above who had allowed the ram to be fetched. But he had courage. A pistol in each hand he padded a little way down

the passage to the door, his carpet slippers flopping at each stride. He even then remembered his courtesy to a stranger. "If you would not mind running upstairs, señor, and telling one of the men in the room above that there is a pail of boiling water over the kitchen fire . . ." Again the door shook at a blow and one of the iron bolts broke in two. Miguel raised both pistols to cover the splintering woodwork at the height of a man's body. "Let them pour it down."

Chase turned his back and began to mount the stairs. Crane was behind him. It was Crane who battered at the door. It was Crane who sought him in smoke and noise and flame, and suddenly it was Crane who met him on the stairs, stumbling down with hands held out from which the blood streamed, and eyes closed under a forehead marked and scarred. The extended hands seemed to reproach him, like those of the suffering Christs in the churches set there by priests to win men by pity to repentance. They seemed to say to him, "This is your doing. What was my betrayal compared to yours? Mine was no betrayal. I followed my nature. I followed what I believed to be the truth. Why have you given me terror, pain, death?" At the bottom of the long stairs Chase put his hands before his face. This is a dream. I am dreaming. He pressed his eyes open with his fingers and looked again. The figure still came down, the bleeding hands still groped for the wall's support, but the voice was saying in Spanish, "My hands. My hands. My hands." It was a Spaniard only. He had been tricked by a chance resemblance, by the darkness of the hair, the slender-

ness of the body. With repulsion he watched the man approach, stumbling blindly. A hand came out towards him, feeling for the wall. The two middle fingers had been shot away above the first joint and the stumps touched his face and marked his cheek with blood. He pushed the man away, so that he fell sprawling to the staircase end and lay there bleeding slowly, Chase supposed, to death. Miguel called up to him, as the ram crashed again against the door, "Señor, señor. Hurry."

The man was a stranger and not Crane, but the resemblance followed him like a ghost through the bitter smoke. It might so easily, he thought, though time and place forbade it, have been Crane. Crane was in the same danger as the anonymous Spaniard, but in more pitiless circumstances. He was alone. He could appeal to no one with outspread arms—"My hands. My hands." He tried to reassure himself: He is still in bed at the inn. But the danger was none the less real because it was not immediate. Whatever shape death takes, he thought, I have placed it there. He reached a landing and from an open door the crash of sound struck him like a blow. He thought: There may be still time. I must go to him, but he was enclosed by smoke, by thunder, by a storm of hatred. There seemed no way out.

The only window in the room was half boarded across. One man at each corner raised and fired his rifle, while a third lay at full length upon the floor and reloaded the exhausted weapons. Chase called through the smoke to them: "They are breaking in the door." The men at the window did not turn, and

the other raised an expressionless face and blinked at him with reddened eyes. He commanded them peremptorily: "You are to fetch boiling water from the kitchen and pour it down on them." His words rang against a wall of noise built between him and them. It was as impossible to reach them in that way as to hurl bread pellets through a steel shutter. He crossed the room, keeping close to the wall, and touched the arm of the man on the left of the window. A hot, excited, cursing face was turned to him and back to the sights of the rifle. The plaster behind Chase's head splattered outwards at the impact of a bullet and he bent. At that level his eyes could travel down the barrel towards its mark, the window of the opposite house. For some seconds nothing was to be seen. Then for a moment a white face gleamed from behind the broken glass and the woodwork of the inn was splintered. Chase said again, "They are breaking in below," and received in reply an impersonal curse and a suggestion that the men above were doing nothing. He left the room. The stairs went steeply up towards the second landing, but the same brown fog drifted down and he could hear the same sounds. The men above were too occupied to attend to a stranger's instructions.

"Señor, señor." He heard Miguel's voice calling. It was less courteous, more hurried. The strategist's plans had gone awry, and anxiety was breaking in. Wooden pieces could not fail him, and he had expected of human beings the same obedience to the touch. Chase looked down the well of the staircase and saw through the fumes the sprawling body of the

young Spaniard, twitching a little like a sleeping dog's. Miguel had retreated to the first stair and faced from it the bending, creaking, splintering door. Chase called down to him: "Where is the kitchen?" and saw the upturned whites of eyes, the fat perplexed face wrinkling with something very like fear. But it was the kind of fear that ennobles, and the gross form had dignity facing death. He cried up, "The door on your left."

But the door was locked on the inside. Chase, with fist raised to beat on it, hesitated. He could hear the blows on the door below, regular as a steam hammer. Why should he help to keep the soldiers out? Caveda was not here to present him with the final choice of allegiance; at the inn, perhaps rising now to dress, was Crane, whom he had endangered; Crane's allies were at the door. But he knew that the solution was not so simple. If these men broke in, they would not be concerned to warn a foreigner, for whom they cared nothing, of a problematical danger. It was more probable that none of the defenders of whom he would be counted one would come out of the house alive. But if the soldiers were repulsed, there was a chance in some lull of the shooting that he might escape.

"Señor, the door will not hold another three minutes." Chase struck with his fist and cried out, "Let me in." He heard a faint rat-like scuffling on the inside and struck again. "Who is there? Open the door." There was no movement to be heard, until he put his ear against the woodwork and caught from just inside the sound of frightened breathing.

"Let me in." He heard the crash of the ram, and Miguel's voice frantic now with impatience and fear unable to utter more than two syllables of appeal.

Chase, listening to the breathing from within, thought suddenly: It is a woman. He had seen but one woman in the inn and he employed his knowledge of her in a whisper that would, he trusted, be blurred by the noise of firing. "Let me in. It is Caveda." The door swung open, and the old woman peered at him through the smoke. Her lids reddened and quivered. "Ramon?" Then she saw who it was and retreated to the kitchen range, where she faced him with suspicion, accusing him in a whisper. "Your voice sounded like his." "The boiling water, quick." She was still under the spell of his voice, watching him with a kind of greed. He had to repeat, "The boiling water," before she lifted a large pail from the range and gave it him.

"Señor. Hurry." He called back to Miguel: "One minute. One more minute," and was already on the landing when the old woman ran at him. "Ramon? What have you done to Ramon?" She seized him by an arm and pulled him back; the heavy pail lurched twice, turned and emptied its contents along the floor. Chase wrenched himself free. There was nothing left but a few drops, not enough to fill a tumbler, while all the floor steamed and crackled, as the water flowed towards the stairs. Chase struck the old woman across the face. "You've done for Caveda now," he cried at her and leaning over the stairs called to Miguel: "Look out for yourself." The small cataract scummed with smoke, falling stair by stair,

would soon explain his words. He ran up the stairs.

The inn was the tallest house in the street. Climbing through the smoke he reached the fourth storey and saw before him a short ladder, leading to a trap-door in the roof. His flight was not fully reasoned. His chief motive was to reach a point as far as possible removed from the street door. He climbed the ladder and came out on to a flat roof edged with a parapet about three feet high. In the centre rose an oblong skylight with smashed glass. Three men crouched behind the parapet on the side of the street, while one kept watch behind the opposite wall. As Chase emerged a bullet smashed a hole in the glass one foot to his right. He dropped down and crawled to the parapet. The air here was clearer, for the smoke was carried by small gusts across the roofs. From the roof of the opposite house, a floor nearer the street, came occasional flashes of fire, and once Chase thought he saw through the smoke and the slowly lightening day the movement of an olive-green uniform. The men paid him no attention, but loaded and fired with a dull regularity. He did not believe that more than once in four times they saw their mark.

Chase crawled to a corner of the parapet, where it rose an extra foot in a kind of ornamental pedestal. With this between himself and the house from which the firing came, he looked down, ready to withdraw his head at the first shot. Neither side, he thought with some satisfaction, showed any great marksmanship. The sound of blows came up to him from below, where the ram was at work upon the door. At the end of the street and sheltered by the corners of the

houses a knot of soldiers stood ready to charge the moment the door should give. That moment arrived sooner than he had feared. The sound of the wood rending came up to him so faintly, drowned in the expanses of the air, that he took it only for the splintering of another panel. What were unmistakable, even through the cracking of the rifles, were the two gentle explosions, as though from a popgun, which were Miguel's last defences. He glanced to his right. The two men, ignorant of their danger, continued to fire at the houses opposite. He called to them, "The door's down," and to his surprise they heard. Crouching double they raced for the trap-door, where the third man joined them in a kind of scurry for companionship. They were advancing towards the enemy, but that meant less to them than the fact that they would be at least fighting in company.

Chase turned back to the parapet and looked over. There was a lull in the shooting, and the windows of the houses opposite suddenly became alive with men in uniform. They were waiting, as he was waiting, for capitulation or a last attack. The seconds went by and nothing happened. The knot of men at the corner of the street shifted indecisively. He could see an officer run across the square to them and thought that it was Quintana. Two or three shots rang out from the house and the faces at the windows disappeared. The officer in the square shouted a command and Chase expected to see the soldiers move into the street. Instead they separated into a loose order and lay down upon the ground with their backs to the inn, their rifles trained upon invisible enemies

at the other side of the square. The officer—Chase knew then that he was Quintana—advanced into the middle of the street and waved a white handkerchief, but the only answer was a renewal of the shooting, which forced him on to his knees. He crept to the side of the road and into a doorway, where Chase could see him rise to his feet and begin to brush his breeches.

At the end of the street the sun was rising. The shooting had begun again, and the sound was reinforced from the opposite side of the market place. Men were firing from the houses there and the soldiers were replying, stretched on their stomachs in the mud and filth, which grew iridescent like a fish's skin as the light increased. The flashes were no longer visible. Brighter fires burnt along the horizon, leapt up the sky like surf, until a ninth wave flooded all the square with light. Suddenly it was as though the sunrise had set fire to the stones and the whole sea had swept irresistibly into the undefended town. He saw the flames before he heard the sound of the explosion. They sprang from the cobbles where the soldiers lay, scarlet and green and mauve, and their heat swept the street and scorched Chase's face at the same moment as the sound broke against his ears. He shut his eyes because he did not wish to see the form that death would take in the square. But behind the closed lids he was not safe. It would have been better to have faced the mutilated bodies of men who mattered nothing to him, for in the darkness he was aware again of Crane's bent figure coming down the stairs, the fingers held out.

"My hands. My hands." Chase called out aloud, almost believing that his voice might carry down the street and across the square an intelligible message: "I'm coming. Wait for me."

He tied his handkerchief to his wrist and ran across the roof. If he was seen that badge of surrender might save his life. On the other side there was no sign of danger. Eight feet below him was a balcony, and ten feet away, across a narrow street, the roof of the opposite house. The first stage was easy and cost no more than torn nails and bleeding fingers, but the leap that was next required of him needed courage. He had shown none hitherto, for he had felt no fear. Miguel's life or death mattered nothing to him, his own not much. But now more depended on his jump than his escape, and the fact that Crane's life might be at stake made him physically afraid. Below the stones waited to mangle and crush his body, but his flesh shrinking seemed to experience also the pain of Crane's legs breaking, of Crane's skull cracking against the cobbles. For these seconds of sickness he was aware of a closer sympathy with Crane, a nearer intimacy than he had ever felt before. Then he jumped and landed safely.

But from the moment when he heard the half-dressed woman's voice telling him that "Señor Crane went away early—half an hour ago, perhaps an hour ago," his body ceased to feel fear. As he left the back door of the inn another bomb exploded in the square, flame and smoke shooting above the roof, chips of stone striking his hands, his

shirt, cutting his face; but his body did not shrink. The roar and rattle of sound, the heat of fire, the acrid taste of smoke left him unmoved. He had sunk into the centre of a hopeless peace. It was as though Crane's face had been removed from him. Is it, he wondered, because he is safe now with the woman he loves? is it because I have lost him to her for ever?

The question was answered for him at the end of the street, where the Montis' house stood. The way was blocked and the sight obscured by a group of women, who chattered together like birds in the first light, but he could see between their shoulders sufficiently well to know at least the eternal quality of his loss. But even in that moment he could think with a painful ashamed satisfaction: "Not to her." He said with anger: "Why don't you go to him?" and pushed them on one side. An elderly grey woman remonstrated with him: "Better not. It's not safe. They wanted him dead." The words struck him like an accusation: "Who? What do you mean?" The woman said, "Caveda. Who else?" and becoming garrulous in the presence of the only ignorant person, began to tell him everything. "They were waiting at the end of the street for him. I heard the shots and looked out of the window. You should have seen him run, poor fellow." The voice caressed the memory with enjoyment.

Chase said slowly, hesitating still to go to the crumpled body beside the wall: "They shot him in the back?" "Oh, no," the woman grew excited with the ramifications of her story. "He ran towards them. You see, he tried to get into that house. He

knocked on the door, but they wouldn't let him in. So there he lies, poor fellow." She licked her lips. "He screamed to them, but they didn't answer." She added with approval: "Of course it wouldn't have been safe."

He left the group of women behind him, throwing off a hand that would have held him back, and advanced towards the one dark patch in a street that ran with early sunlight. He thought: No one has been to him. They have let him lie there unattended. He may not be dead. But he did not run towards the body, as he would have run if he had believed that there was hope. As long as a space of cobbles stretched between himself and his friend he could deceive himself; he could reject the truth. His steps became slower and he called softly, "Michael, Michael." Even in that moment he retained the fear of ridicule. He did not wish the curious women to hear him address a dead body. There was only six feet now between them, and into that space Crane's arms were thrust. The hands were joined and held out, not in the manner of appeal or prayer, but in a way that a criminal might hold out his hands for handcuffs, to thrust them within the imprisoning circle. A gold coin had fallen from them on to the stones. "Michael," he called again, and as he passed reluctantly through that small space, which yet held the difference between hopeful error and despairing truth, he seemed to feel around his hands a kind of echo of pain, experienced by another far away and ages ago.

When at last he reached the body he knew without

touching it that Crane was dead. It was strangely crumpled, as if it had proved inadequate to endure the pain, but the face was at peace, if a complete lack of expression can be called peaceful, no mark retained of the terror, or the pain, or the disappointment. It was as though all the dark feeling of life had left it, beating softly and invisibly away on hushed wings to find some spot where its wounds could be nursed. Although he knew that Crane could not feel his hands, he knelt beside the body to tend it and coax life back, as a bird to its broken nest. But the movement was no more than a disguise, to hide his contemplation and his contrition from the watching women. Even the knowledge of their sympathy would have broken the perfect solitude that he required. So he fingered the body and eased the clothes with a disgust of the dead flesh, which he could not recognise as either the friend he had loved or the enemy he had hated. As he fingered it, he spoke quietly so that the women could not hear or even know that he spoke. He spoke not to the body that could hear him no more than a stone, nor to any spirit that might still be haunting around the deserted flesh, for in that he found it hard to believe, but to the image of Crane in his own mind, which seemed to him the only certain prolongation of life.

He said: "Michael, did you know that I killed you? I was mad. I didn't know what I was doing. I had been alone for two years, until I hated this place." He tried to persuade himself: "I am Francis Chase, an English journalist. This is Michael Crane. I can't

have murdered him, simply because he was going to marry, simply because he began to believe what half the world believes." But the indifferent dead face was sufficient answer. The last word he had spoken to the living body had been one of hate, and the barrier thus raised had not been removed by a death. Only for a moment it had trembled at a touch of pain, at a mutual terror. His fingers touching the eyes to close them, he implored: "If I could share your pain. If I could share it." But the pain had gone; that fact the calm flat face seemed to express. It was not to be recaptured. It had gone with life. The body did not suffer. "I suffer, therefore I am. I suffer not, therefore I am no longer." But the spirit, he argued, the spirit can suffer. He argued with that insensate body as if it were an advocate of the devil, teaching that man is grass. He claimed with an uncertain pride: "I suffer." The answer was immediate. "What is your suffering to my suffering? What is the suffering of the spirit to the suffering of the body? In a few days it will be forgotten."

Chase was aware of how all the host of beliefs in wandering spirits, in life that never died, in pain that was eternal, raised their spears outside his mind. But their spears now were lifted not against himself but against the dead body that mocked him with its single message of annihilation. He was no longer their enemy. He broke down the wall between his mind and them to call them in, but the dead man had the stronger voice. He put his hands to his face and longed for tears. They were the badge of suffering, the badge of peace. If I could suffer as he has suf-

ferred, I should have peace again. But his eyes were dry.

"Is he dead?" he heard a voice say, and rising to his feet he faced Eulelia Crane. He said, opening himself to her accusation and her hatred, "I was responsible. I killed him." But she did not accuse and she showed no sign of hate. "I, too," she said, watching the living and the dead in a kind of arid grief. But when he shook his head she protested with fierceness: "My mother would not let him in. He beat on the door and cried to us. She had locked me in my room. What am I saying? My mother. My mother is here." She put her fingers to her breast, and for a moment he could have believed her, for in the early light her face was grey and her hair lustreless. Her pride had vanished and taken with it the poise of her body, all her youth.

"You shouldn't stand here," he said. "It's dangerous. There's fighting all over the town." As advice his words were useless, but she took them as a challenge. Vitality came back to her with, he supposed, the fragile hope of death. She came down the steps and stood at his side. "You were his friend. Do you forgive me?" He repeated again: "You can't stand here. I'm going to bring him into the house." He lifted the body, finding it light. She led the way and he laid it on the floor of her room. Empty of life it was strange to him, but she, bending down to touch the hands, as though to unclasp them and lay them in the more usual composure of the dead, trembled a little at the touch of the flesh. The body meant more to her than to him, for she was a woman

who had loved him, while he was a friend to whom love had meant only words, arguments, quarrels, the resentful knowledge of his understanding. He thought with jealousy, "She has more left than I have." As if in answer she began to speak in a strained voice: "We were to have gone away this morning. We should have been half-way to Aljerema now. He would have fetched me and we should have ridden together. We were to have been happy."

He said grudgingly: "I've robbed you both of that." She leapt to her feet and faced him with anger. The flame of it lit her face, burnt up the grey old body she had seemed to wear: "Not him," she said. "He is happy. Look at his face. Can you doubt it?" He said: "There's nothing to be seen there." She accepted his words with exultation: "Nothing, of course. He's gone."

"And you?"

She said with less certainty: "I will be happy." It was not a prophecy. It was a declaration of her intention. She added more to herself than to him: "One can be happy if one suffers." But if one ceases to suffer, he thought, what then? Something in the strained clasp of the fingers made him envisage suffering as something tangible and visible, a burning ring into which the dying man had thrust his hands. But Crane was not alone in that region. He was companioned even in death by the woman he had married. She had followed him along the road which she had herself shown him; her expression told Chase that, the half-closed eyes, the body strained against the wall, the hands that trembled with the desire to

touch. They suffered and were together, he thought, while I am still alone. He appealed to her directly: "If only I could feel," and saw how immediately she surrendered the pain and peace of her contemplation at the appeal of one least worth of her charity. She said softly, "Think of him as he was yesterday and as he is now. Isn't that enough?" From another it would have been an accusation. Not many, he knew, would have followed his thoughts into their obscure retreat and answered him so directly, as he desired to be answered. From another it would have meant, "See what you have done." From her it was an offering of peace if he could but take it, the peace that would come with atonement, with an unjealous ungrudging pain. He shook his head. "I had lost him yesterday. I hated him yesterday."

He saw her wince, as if she had found a source of deeper anguish: "Think of him before that, before I knew him." Again the path she offered him was closed. "The future was always there. I should have lost him." He cried desperately, "And didn't I do right? Hadn't he betrayed Caveda? You can't betray and ask not to be betrayed."

She watched him puzzled. He could see that for almost the first time understanding failed her. "Caveda. Caveda. What was Caveda to you?"

"He was my kind. He was everything that Crane was leaving." He added, ready at last to admit to what a high position that last rank raised him: "He was your lover." She said again, her brow furrowed in the effort to understand: "But to you? But to you?"

for you." San Juan faded from his knowledge, Spain faded, he was no more than a sense of loneliness in a darkening room and a sense of fear. He cried out to her, "I'm afraid of forgetting," seeing in that threat of no more pain the final condemnation. "Stay with me," he implored her with little hope of any response. But he had forgotten her readiness to defend. He had seen her defend others who were as unworthy; Caveda, herself. Now her spirit flashed to his succour, and he could recognise its charity, mercy, above all its limitless suffering. She put out her hands to him, and with the gesture light and the world came flooding back, the awareness to sound and sight, to their defenceless insignificance in a world that beat on the small room that contained them and the body of the man whom they loved. If it was his tomb, they were the grains of corn lest his body wake and hunger; they were the pitcher of wine lest his body should feel thirst; they were the slaves for its service. It seemed to them, as the world swam back with desires and perplexities and curious hungers, that never had a man and woman joined hands for a better reason or in more perfect accord.

Down the long passage, past the room where her husband consorted in the dawn with the trials and sanctities of the dead, Señora Monti advanced towards them, her eyes bright with triumph and hands already outstretched to bless their sad union.

"A real masterpiece."

—The Daily News

The Man Within

By GRAHAM GREENE

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